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CONFUSION OF FACES

A Documentary on Modern German History
(1517-1933)

By ERICH MEISSNER

It is the view of the author of this work that there is in Europe no national history. While his historical approach is therefore, based on Germany from the Reformation to the outbreak of war in 1939, he is concerned not only with German history because of its importance for the history of Europe as a whole, but also the clue to the understanding of modern Europe in the German Reformation. This schism originated in a popular and inarticulate revolt against the Roman Church, which was first uncovered and then repudiated by Luther. The spirit which inspired this revolt continued, however, to operate within Lutheranism; and the schism inaugurated the secularization of European life, culminating in the revolutionary conception of the State—a combination of 'irreligion, utopian hope, and compulsion'.

In the course of his account, the author considers, in separate chapters, the French Revolution, the rise of Prussia, the decline of Austria, German democracy, and the history of the Reich. In particular, he holds an original and very suggestive view of the role of Wallenstein in the Thirty Years War, and the reasons for his failure; and in his interpretation of the French Revolution he brings us back to Burke. There is a detailed account of the crisis of July 1914. But the largest political issues are raised: total war and its political implications, the relation of democracy to foreign affairs, the danger of 'over-righteousness' in politics, and other problems are discussed in relation to historical events. Hitlerism is diagnosed as the consummation of many tendencies which, the author believes, cannot be expected to disappear altogether with the collapse of the regime itself.

The author offers no simple programme of religious restoration of Europe, and explicitly rejects 'religious archaism'. But as he is especially concerned with spiritual forces, both good and evil, in the course of history, he sees no solution of the problem solely on the political and economic planes. He considers the task undertaken in this book completed with the explanation of Hitler's rise to power.

This is not a book for those who like their answers ready-made. Mr. Meissner's wisdom and insight will delight those who cannot accept any facile way out of our problems—either with the stream or against it—and he contributes, to the best English tradition of political theory, the support of a Central European mind of the finest quality.

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‘And ye shall say: To God belongeth righteousness, but unto us the confusion of faces, as it is come to pass this day.’ (Baruch i, 15.)

‘Not to know the never-changing is blindly to breed calamity.’ (Táo Teh King, ch. 16.)

CONFUSION OF FACES

The Struggle between Religion and
Secularism in Europe



A Commentary
on Modern German History
1517–1939

by
ERICH MEISSNER .

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TO THE MEMORY OF
HANS LITTEN
WHO WAS TORTURED TO DEATH
IN HITLER'S CONCENTRATION CAMPS

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The first chapter has been published (in a much shorter form) in the *Hibbert Journal* (July 1943). I wish to express my thanks to the Editor for having given permission to reprint it.

INTRODUCTION

This book was planned at a time when the prospects of National Socialist Germany looked bright; now that it has been completed the victory of the allied nations has been achieved. This all-important change—pregnant though it is with possibilities for the future and the happiness of millions—could not affect the purpose and character of the present publication. To study modern German history, neither in haste nor in anger, yet anxious to find the clue to the modern situation, is, surely, a task that does not lose its urgency through the breakdown of Hitler's régime, nor would it have become superfluous through Hitler's victory. National Socialism grew out of the traditions of the Bismarck Reich, as from fertile soil; a new Germany can only come into existence through a mighty creative effort, reconquering the truth whereby the nations live. That needs time; Hitler needed just a couple of years. It seems therefore right that the present investigations should only lead up to the rule of Hitler and the outbreak of war. How could post-war problems, history that has still to be made, be worked into the framework of an historical inquiry? The important arrangements, political and otherwise, that have to be made, cannot immediately be seen in their right proportion nor can they be properly estimated in the light of history. Some time must pass before it will be possible to discern the rough outline of the post-war world.

On the other hand, historical knowledge should influence, even guide, political action; it should give colour and substance to the picture of the future which every thoughtful man is anxious to form in times so full of peril and uncertainty. It is always a serious omission not to call the dead into counsel. The present book attempts to lead up to conclusions and even intrudes (though rarely) into the hazardous sphere of practical suggestions. But on the whole the principle has been adopted (which has been more popular with writers in the past than it is, unfortunately, today) of relying upon the willingness of the reader to draw conclusions himself. This is not only an attitude of courtesy; the nature of the problem forbids dogmatizing. Facts are presented, tendencies revealed, but the application of the past and its experiences to present conditions and problems depends largely upon individual convictions which are themselves independent of and frequently insufficiently supported by historical evidence.

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If I were asked to state briefly the thesis of the present study I should reluctantly, put it like this: the outstanding fact in European history during the last four centuries since the Reformation is the secularization of life. 'God is no longer needed,' as Ernst Niekisch put it bluntly. This thorough transformation, gradually growing in its intensity, is beginning to reveal its true nature. In spite of many undeniable achievements, rashly called 'progress', the nature of this development turns out to be negative. Modern Man has been the loser. When exposed to severe tests and luring temptations, his moral fortitude, the soundness and sanity of his mind appear to be weakened and impaired because these endowments need spiritual support which in former days religion had given and which modern secularism seems unable to provide. Christianity, during this period, has been in full retreat and still is, in spite of animated religious discussion which is, after all, not a sign of strength. There is a spiritual vacuum, likely to spread. In Germany it has become apparent. Is it permissible, therefore, to label secularism as the source of all evil and to accept boldly the practical implications of that diagnosis? As individuals we certainly may (and perhaps feel compelled to) but the study of history will not supply the necessary assurance.

Why not? First, there is historical evidence that seems to be pointing in the opposite direction. Religion, the antagonist of secularism, cannot be called in its actual results an unmitigated blessing. Lucretius wrote: 'Religion has given birth to sinful and unholy deeds.' This, of course, is perfectly true and we must add that the history of the Christian Churches provides even better illustrations than the Roman poet himself could think of. He resorted to legend, we could point out a long list of historical facts, some of them diabolical manifestations. Secondly, there have been secularist philosophies in history, capable of giving fortitude, courage and a strong sense of duty. The obvious insufficiency of modern secularism does not entitle us to reject the non-religious outlook on principle and to deny its possibilities. The question: Is Secularism true? does it correspond to reality? cannot be answered by the historian who as such is unable to carry the investigation any further.

The suspense of judgement on such cardinal questions (the great importance of which history indeed does reveal) may well be called unsatisfactory. But a man must know his tools. Theology, surely, is in a very different position and should be able to come (on its own ground, of course) to more definite conclusions. Apostasy of individuals and nations constitutes a problem that might be successfully explored in the light of doctrine. Dostoevsky devoted his great imaginative power to this task, revealing the chaos that lurks behind the pretty screen of enlightened bourgeois atheism. But though his rank as an artist was

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quickly recognized, there was less readiness to accept his warning message. The strange men and women who wander through Dostoevsky's apocalyptic landscape could easily be mistaken for creations of a profound but eccentric mind—typically Russian perhaps, at any rate peculiar. But in actual fact Dostoevsky's vision is simple and of general relevance: the renunciation of Christ, he maintains, does not inaugurate an era of enlightenment; on the contrary, it invokes demons. It seems most desirable that a great theologian should undertake what Dostoevsky attempted as an artist. It would make it easier to state the problems of to-day, dispensing with all clichés.

All this explains why the main thesis of this book (attempting to give the clue to our modern predicament) cannot be offered as a strictly historical conjecture. There is, of course, cumulative evidence (the only proof historians can give) but there is not enough, and there is contradictory evidence as well. Therefore it may be said that the present publication is, strictly speaking, not a genuine historical study. Its subject is the story of the past; the method applied is, I hope, historical too, for facts are regarded as sacred, not to be tampered with. But use has also been made of persuasions which historical evidence can neither sustain nor discredit. They form the undercurrents of the argument. Whether such complexity be permissible, perhaps even appropriate, is not for the author to pronounce.

There is another matter of principle that has to be mentioned in this introduction. A commentary on modern German history must certainly stress developments that are peculiar to Germany. This has been attempted. Yet there is another category of facts and tendencies that deserve similar attention. They are the deeper currents indicating the unity of Europe which exists even against the will of the nations concerned. If unrecognized and defied, this unity must express itself in common disaster which parochial prudence will not be able to forestall. The nations of Europe do not live in splendid isolation, running their courses like comets, they rise and set rather like constellations, moving together. Such is their destiny and the law of their being. The student of history cannot fail to see that every commotion of some strength and consequence which can be observed in one country is accompanied by corresponding stirrings, be they but quiverings, in other nations as well. National history must be approached therefore from a supranational point of view. Even the most bitter conflicts between European nations cannot be understood nor can they be turned into fruitful enterprises unless European solidarity be recognized as a serious fact. Otherwise grotesque consequences will have to be expected. A military victory might become a dubious achievement should the conqueror have

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accepted (perhaps quite unintentionally) some of the tendencies which he had set out to destroy but which were nevertheless not altogether foreign to him because they were a common affliction, varying, of course, in degree and intensity. This was the problem which Metternich together with other liberators of Europe clearly perceived. The situation to-day is similar. The words of the Dutch theologian, Dr. 't Hooft, deserve attention though they refer only to one particularly topical aspect of the problem. 'It is difficult to measure the extent of the ravages that have been caused . . . by all the methods which have characterized the régime of the masters of Europe during these last years. And I think not only of the young people who follow these masters but also of those who fight against them. Many of these instead of resisting spiritually as well as politically have allowed themselves to be conquered by the spirit of the jungle and use in combat the same methods as their adversaries.'

Thus we are compelled to choose a wider setting for the presentation of national history—the framework is Europe. More than that: the common European heritage is better called the core; it keeps the nations not only alive but sound. The breaking away from Europe and its traditions, advocated by uprooted men as a programme of national rejuvenation, is in fact the very opposite: it is national suicide. Germany has challenged this truth; she has been giving a demonstration, no clearer evidence could be desired. Yet the anxious question remains (and it cannot be answered in the near future): will the lesson be learnt? Or will the preachers of unrepentant self-deception who are bound to come, win the nation's attention and approval? Let us not underestimate the moral force and integrity that are needed if a nation is to retrace its steps under the pressure of failure and defeat. Bitter experience does not necessarily call forth wholesome springs. The student of modern affairs cannot sincerely indulge in optimism. The facts are too sombre. In his weaker moments he might feel tempted to accept the profound and melancholy wisdom of Ecclesiastes. But even at times when things seem to be going from bad to worse, there remains, through providential care, a small minority of men who do not 'bow their knees unto Baal'. The records of history, inspired by Fama the goddess of talk, give less space to them than to the evildoers, but that, surely, does not reduce their actual importance.

Dominus regnavit, irascantur populi.

I

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There is a widespread agreement nowadays among students of history and among those who are trying to comprehend and analyse the present crisis, that the Reformation is the most outstanding event in European history because of its far-reaching results. Some people go further and maintain that the Reformation has not yet come to its proper consummation, that the issues involved are still acute and alive, or have come to life again, that the final word has not yet been spoken. This opinion, however, is fairly modern and has not outgrown its first tentative stages. But the time has gone (having lasted for about 200 years) when the Reformation was considered nothing but a period of historical interest. Early in the nineteenth century Goethe said :

‘There is only one interesting thing about the Reformation and that is Luther’s character. That is what people admire. All the rest is but a muddle that is still worrying us daily.’

The verdict of the great German poet will hardly be accepted to-day. We have come to understand that Luther’s work is more interesting than his character. Muddle there was, most certainly, but the fate of Europe was involved in that muddle. To begin with, the obvious truth must be stated that the term ‘Reformation’ is misleading. There was no Reformation in the early sixteenth century, there was a schism and it turned out to be a permanent one.

About 1550 Europe was divided into two hostile camps, it had lost its religious unity, never since restored. There followed a period covering roughly speaking 100 years when both sides tried to achieve by military force what argument and persuasion had been unable to accomplish—the victory over their opponent. There were certain moments in this gruesome struggle when contemporaries believed that the restoration of religious unity through battle and massacre was in sight, though never within reach. Such a moment had come in 1629 when the Catholic Còmmander-in-Chief, Wallenstein, the mystery man, had conquered Protestant Germany and had reached the shores of the Baltic with his mighty armies. Three years later the tide had turned. The King of Sweden, Gustavus Adolphus, had established his headquarters in Munich. Germany was under his control; the fall of Vienna seemed imminent. A complete defeat of either Catholicism or Protestantism inside the Holy Roman Empire would have drastically affected the reli-

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gious situation in the whole of Europe. The future development would have been very different. Yet the critical moments passed by; the religious wars ended in failure and fatigue. Disunity was accepted with resignation as an unalterable fact. The people of the seventeenth century who had gone through these bitter experiences were, however, not ready to believe that the common bonds of Christendom had been broken altogether. The sense of unity lingered on though its basis had been shattered; it lingers on even nowadays in a state of weakness and futility. There was, however, a new fervent hope arising from religious resignation—the hope of finding a secular basis on which European unity could be built. The great attraction of such hopes and endeavours was their plausibility. The treasures of art and literature, the common standards of living and refinement, the advance of science and education, and, above all, the common sense of all men of goodwill, was all this not enough to re-establish unity on even firmer ground, leaving the Churches and their obsolete quarrels to themselves? The actual trend of affairs moved, however, in spite of these plausible hopes, in the opposite direction. The forces working for disunity, notably modern nationalism, proved infinitely stronger than any kind of secular humanism. This development reached its climax in the wars of the twentieth century. A disillusioned man who in 1648 listened to the church bells ringing in the peace of Westphalia, was actually confronted by the same urgent problems as men to-day. He might have asked himself two questions:

1. Will there ever again be religious unity now that both debate and armed conflict have failed? Must we not, after such experiences, turn our backs on these issues, which seem to harbour disaster?

2. Can unity be established on secular grounds (cultural, political, or economic) and what grounds are we going to choose?

As individuals we may have made up our minds and be ready to answer these questions one way or the other, but it cannot be denied that they still exist and present to us problems of some weight and moment.

The sixteenth-century schism from which all these consequences proceeded had its origin in Germany and was brought about by a man who was a most typical German. Martin Luther could have belonged to no other nation. A heavy responsibility falls on him, whatever our personal attitude towards the Reformation and its issues may be. Luther himself always accepted full responsibility for all his actions, being well aware of their tremendous implications. His peculiar attitude (which will be discussed later) made it possible for him readily to shoulder a burden that other men would have been most reluctant to accept. Here is one example. In the peasants' war of 1525 Luther sided eventually with the Princes but he made his decision at a time when the victory of the

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peasants seemed likely. He fiercely encouraged the Princes to use ruthlessly all the power at their disposal to overcome the rebels and to punish them for their violence. 'We live in such strange times,' he wrote, 'that a Prince may gain Heaven by shedding blood whilst others get nowhere by praying.' The revenge of the Princes after their victory was ferocious. Facing courageously the facts in all their grimness Luther wrote, 'It was I, Martin Luther, who slew all the peasants. All their blood is on my head.' Let us briefly consider the personality and accomplishments of the great Reformer before we examine his work, which was destined to overshadow him. As a theologian he belongs, I think, to the same category as Saint Augustine, though I do not want to stress this point. The range of his mind was wide. He could work out a complicated theological and philosophical argument as he did in his controversy with Erasmus. He was able to reduce all the subtleties of theology to a simple statement which children would understand. But he never talked down to anybody. He wrote fine poetry, simple and straightforward verses, yet he abused his enemies like a drunkard, sometimes even like a madman. Luther could sway the masses with his powerful eloquence but he could also comfort the lonely individual. He threatened the Pope and cursed the mighty; he unhinged the traditions of centuries but he also wrote a letter to his little son fully adopting a child's attitude and outlook without the slightest taint of patronizing superiority. As a prose writer he has no rival in German literature. His Bible translation is one of the greatest treasures which the German nation possesses and was regarded as such throughout the centuries. The first generation of writers who have lost all direct contact with it is just about to appear but through Nietzsche who is still Luther's disciple, remnants of the great tradition are passed on even now, though in a strange state of amalgamation.

The most conspicuous element of Luther's character, next to his readiness to answer for his actions, was his courage. There is no need to enlarge upon this. The journey of the excommunicated monk to Worms where he had to face by himself the powers of the world—Emperor and Papacy combined—is proof enough. At that moment when Luther's trial took place (17th April 1521) he saved his cause by conquering his fear and risking his life. It matters little that he was in actual fact less endangered than he thought he was. Sickingen and his forces outside Worms; the attitude of the populace (clearly revealed in the dispatches of the Papal nuncio Aleander, who feared for his life); influential Lutheran sympathizers among the Princes; all this made it practically impossible to treat the obstinate heretic like Huss in 1415 and burn him. But nevertheless had Luther given in (and it looked at first as if he would) his whole enterprise would have come to nothing, there would

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have been no Lutheran schism. Certain moments, sometimes seconds only (as in this case) count much in history. Yet there are other less positive sides to Luther's character which must be mentioned. His emotional sensibility was excessive. Depression and despair seem to have been the dark undercurrent of Luther's life. He was frequently overcome by these sinister gloomy moods. He was tormented by them but he never allowed them to affect his will. It is the mark of genuine despair to yield to sadness, to come to terms with it. This certainly was not Luther's case. In his letters he often mentioned this profound sadness, yet he does not identify himself with it, he speaks like a man who has resisted and perhaps even conquered. Catholic scholars like Janssen and Denifle try to make the most of Luther's despair but they distort the whole picture. I think, however, that those who want to get really detailed information about Luther's life should read his Catholic biographers. One must only bear in mind that the details may be correct and the conclusions and general outline desperately wrong.

Most of the books on the Reformation give the impression that the whole affair was overdue and therefore bound to happen. Yet the opposite is true. Luther's action, the current of events let loose by his peculiar attack on the Church, could hardly have been foreseen. On the contrary, a development of that kind was unlikely. If a well-instructed man had set himself, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the task of analysing the general religious situation, he would presumably have given a true and accurate picture of the Renaissance Church, her worldliness, her abuses, her profound corruption and spiritual paralysis; he would have stressed the need for reform and the widespread demand for it. All this had found its clear manifestation and a careful observer could hardly fail to give the proper place to evident facts and prevailing tendencies. But analysis would not have been able to reveal the future, all its conclusions were bound to be misleading. And why? Because the data within reach were pointing in the wrong direction and the data which really mattered were hidden. This is the crux of all historical analysis; the results are often barren and futile. At the beginning of the sixteenth century the forces working for reform were already clearly recognizable, they were alive and active, well-marshalled, they knew their purpose and their methods of procedure. Their prestige was steadily increasing. They were the Humanists, their leader was Erasmus. This great scholar, enthusiastically praised by his followers, seemed to be the man destined to have a decisive influence on Church affairs and religious life. No intellectual in Europe can claim nowadays to hold a position of authority comparable to Erasmus' reputation and power. His position was unique and he knew it. The Humanists were on the

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whole full of hope about their enterprise, but the modern critic taking into account the failure of the Conciliar movement, may feel inclined to think that the Humanist reformers would not have fared any better. It is possible that reform was only to be got at the price of schism. The battering ram necessary to destroy the ramparts of selfishness and inertia was not at the disposal of the Humanists. Anyway, four years after the diet of Worms, Erasmus, the man of destiny, was brushed aside and had become a reluctant defender of the Catholic Church, one among many. The Erasmian reform which had seemed to be *the* solution some years ago was then no longer possible. Schism had come instead.

Luther was a surprise; hence his success. For the response which he found in Germany and Europe is due to the fact that he said what many people were ready to accept, but it had not been said before with such force and so frankly. His readiness for schism increased his popularity.

There were many undercurrents of heretical thought in Europe and they must have been particularly strong in Germany. An 'age of faith' has never existed: it is sheer fiction. If we talk about 'religious unity' we must be aware of the fact that the term is inaccurate, indicating hardly more than the absence of open conflict. There had always been heresies in the Middle Ages, many of them widespread, and there was presumably more disbelief than is actually recorded. Persecution had driven the opposition underground, yet it existed and affected decisively the course of events. Contrary to Humanism and its peculiar urge for reform, this underground movement was represented rather by the unlearned and illiterate. To call it a movement is to say already too much; it lacked doctrine and coherence. We should rather call it a Christian expectancy nourished by ideas and trends of thought like the opposition of the Lollards and Waldensians. In dealing with this widespread inarticulate heresy the historian has to face a problem which can only be solved by way of conjecture. The written evidence is extremely poor, quite naturally. Nevertheless we know something definite about this Christian expectancy. There was a strong antisacerdotal and antisacramental feeling. The major claims of the Church were repudiated more by instinct than by argument. It would be wrong, however, to interpret this silent opposition of the Common Man as a sign of scepticism or rationalism that drifts away from Christian tradition. On the contrary, there was an almost mystic fervour and desire to introduce Christianity into everyday life, into all secular spheres so that Christian men would behave and act differently from non-Christians. Who can deny the importance of such aspirations, who can doubt that they touch the very essence of Christian religion?

Two points, however, must be stressed:

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1. The problem was not a new one. Christians had been fully alive to it right through the centuries. 'Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.' The whole history of medieval Christianity can well be interpreted as the one great attempt to establish the Church as a power *in* the world though not *of* the world. Even the critic who holds that this attempt had failed should not blind himself to the fact that it was seriously undertaken.

2. The inarticulate heresy was ill equipped to tackle the tremendous task of Christian realization, which, so it seemed, the Church had abandoned. These simple people felt that something had gone radically wrong but that was about all. When Luther began to doubt openly the validity of the Church, all this hidden radical opposition came to light suddenly and he found himself to his greatest astonishment driven along by a mighty tide. The Humanists broke away as soon as the danger of schism became apparent but the inarticulate heresy gave him effective support during the first initial stages of the struggle. This is not surprising for Luther's basic convictions as well as his temperament had much in common with the underground movement. His defiance of the Church found, quite naturally, the ready response of those whose outlook was primarily anticlerical. The anticlericalism of the illiterate was different in character from the eloquent and sarcastic criticisms of the Humanists. Erasmus and his followers mocked at the monks and clerics, attacking their ignorance and corruption, but the doubts and misgivings of the inarticulate heresy were deeper—priesthood as such, its sacramental functions and claims were resented.

The sacerdotal and sacramental character of the medieval Church had certainly preserved the worship of Christ; it had deepened the sentiments of veneration associated with his name—sentiments which even the freethinker finds difficult to shake off altogether. But on the other hand the Church could not fail to rouse protest. The discrepancy between that mighty priestly institution and the narrative of the Gospels was too conspicuous. The lay heretics and all those who in later times took up a similar position could not be persuaded that the difference which they noticed was nothing but the difference between seed and fruit. Such defence was considered sophistry. What an amount of ingenuity has been wasted to defend this crooked thesis! Yet the conviction remained unshaken that the Church had moved away from Christ. Luther's condemnation of all man-made laws in religion was a forceful expression of that critical attitude.

The term Protestantism is most appropriate, though its original meaning was purely political—referring to the attitude of the Lutheran princes at the diet of Speier (1529). The new movement was a violent protest

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against the priest and against all safeguards which the sacerdotal Church claimed to provide for the benefit of ordinary, sinful men. The inarticulate heresy knew only of one road to salvation—Christian conduct. Saint James was put above Saint Paul. Both the Church and Luther disapproved of this interpretation of Christianity. The plausible simplification which the lay heretics proposed tended to secularize the Christian religion by reducing it to a moral code.

Let us all be kind—this pitiful platitude nevertheless seemed to comprise Christianity. Yet what the lay heretics and kindred minds were inclined to forget or to deny is this: in order to instil the love of the neighbour, Heaven and earth (and Hell) must be moved. According to the original Christian conception, human goodness is related to transmundane spheres, to dominions and powers and cannot even exist in its genuine form unless the right relationship or conjunction be established. If this is true, the efforts of the moralist are, surely, of little avail. The problem is beyond his reach. The Graeco-Roman world had been swarming with moralists—Christ was not one of them. He healed, He forgave sins and ‘talked in parables to the blind’. He was not shocked by human misconduct, only by human pretensions and hardness of heart. His followers and friends did not consider Him primarily a teacher. As Calvin put it: ‘Do we receive no other advantage from the righteousness of Christ than the proposal of an example for our imitation? Who can bear such blasphemy?’

From the dogmatic point of view it must be disquieting to notice that Christ’s redemptive action (to which Calvin refers) seems to have had very little effect on human affairs at large. The world runs pretty well its old course; nothing seems to have happened. The redemption of mankind has not become apparent and must therefore be either denied or relegated to some hidden sphere of which we have no knowledge. The lay heretics did not want to be sidetracked. The world, they held, was heathen and unregenerate; the Christian Church had come to terms with it. Wars, executions, cruelties, oppressions, lack of charity, pretensions, and hypocrisy—all this was still afflicting mankind with unabated vigour. Poor indeed had been the Christian leaven. The sacerdotal Church, with mundane skill, was taking part in the old and wasteful game of the mighty.

The protest against the priest and all his works was vigorously represented by Luther; he was full of schismatic fervour. At the beginning of the trouble the son of the miner was speaking in the name of the peasants and artisans who were the true protestants.

Yet he disappointed many who thought that he did not go far enough. The Zwickau prophets, Karlstadt, Münzer, the Anabaptists, all these

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very different men and the movements they represent drew their strength from the Christian expectancy. Luther called them all 'Schwärmgeister'. He turned against them, choosing as the main point of controversy the validity of Holy Communion as a genuine sacrament. It is worth remembering that the reformer spent most of his energy in fighting the inarticulate heresy. His combat against the Church he considered by far the easier task. Luther succeeded on the whole. There was nobody who could claim to be his equal on the other side. He scattered the inarticulate heresy and forced it into sectarian seclusion. The partial victory of Protestantism was not only based on the fall of the Renaissance Church but also on the defeat of the inarticulate heresy and its genuine Christian longings. To transform society was no longer considered a Christian task, and Luther regarded the world as an inn where the devil is master. 'Thus, if your money is stolen or you are injured in your honour, that is just what you have to expect in this house.' This quietism was all the more dangerous because Luther attributed to the secular power of the State—to the 'Sword' as he said—an almost divine dignity. He blends God and the Devil. 'The hand that wields the secular sword is not a human hand, but the hand of God. It is God, not man, who hangs and breaks on the wheel, it is God who wages war.' The broken bodies of the 'Schwärmgeister' were the foundation on which the reformer built his dark and mystical doctrine of the State. The cause which the lay heretics represented (though inadequately) did not die with them. Too stirring, indeed, is the contribution which they still have to offer.

What was the basis of Luther's peculiar strength which helped him against all his enemies, Catholics, Humanists, and sectarians alike? The centre of Luther's thoughts was theological and doctrinal, there was no other source of inspiration guiding his actions and moulding his ideas. He took a lively interest in many other things, political, social, and economic problems, education, the wellbeing of his nation; he aired his views on many subjects, he interfered in politics, but all this was incidental and of secondary importance to him. His real and only concern was theology, which gave him a starting point unaffected by worldly considerations—a firm anchorage. It was his doctrine of justification, the outcome of bitter personal experience and intense struggle that shook the foundations of the Renaissance Church.

Luther was driven on by apostolic ardour. This term is not used here in a vague and rhetorical sense; apostolic ardour is neither a particularly intense zeal nor is it eloquence. It is fundamentally a submission to a stern rule of conduct which allows no exceptions. It can best be explained by quoting a passage from the Acts: 'Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said: We ought to obey God rather than men.'

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This attitude finds expression in Luther's famous hymn, the beacon of Protestantism all over the world :

Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott
ein gute Wehr und Waffen. . . .¹

Such unflinching obedience turns cowards and fools—we might better say mortal men—into steadfast and unconquerable fighters. Peter who had denied his Master became the Rock on which the Church was built. Luther had this apostolic ardour, the pristine gift of the Christian faith. Therefore he was able to break down the defences put up by men. Modern times are marked by a widespread sense of drift—we are floating, never quite sure which current will seize us next. Luther's path was beset by many dangers and temptations but this modern malady he did not know.

The inevitable consequence of this attitude was a sublime indifference towards the final outcome of his endeavours and strife. He hoped it would be peace and concord and unity restored but he boldly faced the possibility that things might be taking a very different turn, that chaos, war, and disruption might spring up as the harvest from his seed. Modern men may marvel at such an attitude and regard it as monstrous but we have to admit: such was Luther's belief, he acted upon it, and Calvin shared his view. Luther's controversy with Erasmus illustrates this point well. Erasmus opposed Schism, ready to put up with an un-reformed Church if only disunity were avoided. He was a semi-secularist; his starting point was the general situation, his real concern was culture. He thought highly of the benefits of religion, he wanted to improve and to ennoble religious life in general. But if reform put into practice after Luther's fashion led to discord, hatred and fanaticism, if the danger of schism and the loss of unity was imminent, then he felt sure that the wrong way had been chosen. This cautious view Luther rejected as un-Christian. He was firmly convinced that there must be no compromise on religious issues, yet the outcome of it all, he thought, was not man's affair, nor was it his responsibility—it rests with God. We can well understand that such reasoning liberates and intensifies human energy. It makes responsibility—such as there is—easier to bear. Man goes fearlessly ahead as long as he feels that his marching orders are authoritative and admit no doubt. 'The Holy Ghost is not a sceptic . . . without certitude Christianity cannot exist.' Luther represents the genuine Christian attitude. His indifference towards success, his ultimate unworldliness, stirred the nations of Europe; Erasmus' concern about the general situation led to nothing.

¹ A mighty fortress is our God, a good shield and weapon.

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Luther's controversy with Erasmus deserves further investigation. It can be called the climax of the Reformation because it revealed not only the essentials of the present conflict but also the potentialities which the situation contained. A fundamental issue was at stake. Luther denied human merit; Erasmus, following traditional lines, affirmed it. That gulf, it seems, could not be bridged. Luther's idea when carried to its full extreme is antinomian—the Law has gone (be it the Decalogue or some other moral code). It is not its validity that is denied but rather its function as an effective guide. For how could there be sinners if there were no law to be broken? The amorality of proud philosophers (such as Nietzsche) has nothing in common with an outlook on life that makes the sense of guilt its very centre. Guilt exists and goodness exists but man's achievements and failures are not of his own making; he is carried along by the mighty tide of evil or by the counter current of grace. This challenging doctrine which the East finds more palatable than the West, is animated by a strong and joyful impulse: humility manifests itself as a reality not as a pretension. The penitent thief is the true man; the great sinner is the friend of God. This outlook is, if really lived up to, a complete reversal of common standards. But is that surprising? It is said in the Acts that the early Christians were called 'those who have turned the world upside down'. Neither medieval nor modern Christians can justly be accused of having caused such a commotion. Yet the Western reader of Dostoevsky is not unfamiliar with that peculiar and potent humility—the inarticulate philosophy of sinners—which seems capable of shaking the foundations of human life. There is one immediate consequence. The brotherhood of men, sought in vain by idealists, is established by sinners. This is done without effort even without intention. It comes about, it is perfectly natural—just a fact.

Nobody can deny the vitality of this outlook. On the other hand its dangerous implications are obvious. Together with moral indignation, the readiness to punish fades away. Western traditions put up an impregnable dyke against the onrush of this tumultuous tide. Luther himself, though his thoughts moved in that direction, was not at all prepared to draw any definite antinomian conclusions. He declined to exploit the possibilities of his own advanced position—Germany and perhaps Europe might have become an outpost of the East. Had Luther pushed on, he would perhaps have regained the support of the lay heretics who were groping after Christian humility as an effective virtue capable of changing the face of the earth. The philosophy of sinners would have found their approval though they were not able to formulate it themselves and easily fell into the trap of barren moralism. In other words: Western Christendom seems to have been on the verge of a mighty trans-

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formation which, should it have taken its course unchallenged, would have entailed the elimination of our Graeco-Roman tradition. For the European ideas of human merit and moral worth are mainly derived from Greece and Rome. They have been more firmly accepted than the Christian doctrine of Man which, in the West, superseded and partly absorbed the teaching of pagan moralists. When Christian traditions began to fade, the belief in human merit assumed its former place of unchallenged supremacy. Therefore the struggle between Luther and Erasmus is of great historical significance, and it is by no means right to maintain that Luther won. The Schism, it is true, could not be prevented, insofar Erasmus was defeated. But the idea of man's responsibility proved stronger than the reformer's attack, partly perhaps because this attack, though formidable, never fully developed.

The pendulum swung back again. Calvinism which accepted Luther's denial of human merit managed to distil from that doctrine what seems to be its very contradiction: a rigid morality soon leading to a new and most peculiar form of selfrighteousness.

Let us not glibly label this profound alternative as a difference between East and West. Blake, I suppose, knew little about Eastern Christianity. He drew his inspiration from the Gospels. Yet he vehemently rejected the standards of the classical world and elaborated a defiant Christian philosophy which considers forgiveness of sin the essence of Christianity and deprecates the moral virtues. Mercy, in Blake's poetry, has become a song. His outlook is clearly expressed in the following remarkable words:

The Roman Virtues, Warlike Fame,
Take Jesus' and Jehovah's name:
For what is Antichrist but those
Who against sinners Heaven close
With Iron bars, in Virtuous State,
And Rhadamanthus at the Gate?

The semisecularist attitude of Erasmus reminds us of our present situation. There is a great amount of discussion about Christian revival and the reconstruction of a truly Christian society. It is common knowledge that our civilization is passing through dangerous stages and men want to apply adequate remedies to check further deterioration. Christianity, therefore, is invoked to save our civilization. What grounds have we to believe that it will? The Emperor Augustus might, with some justification, have made that claim. Christianity, unlike its begetter, Judaism, strongly emphasized the world beyond and concentrated men's fears and desires upon it. There was an attitude of indifference, some-

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times even of hostility and contempt towards this world and its values and worries. The faith did not conquer the Roman world as a movement for reform. It was, strictly speaking, no movement at all. Christians did not strive after some goal or ideal; they simply accepted a gift and rejoiced. The early missionaries cared only for one thing: Christ's resurrection as a promise of life eternal. The startling news had transformed a band of disheartened disciples who were sitting behind locked doors into a team of fearless preachers. The name 'Apostolic Church' is therefore most appropriate, for the Christian religion is based on the witness of these men. 'If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain.' (1 Corinth.) It is impossible to estimate to what extent the belief in Christ's resurrection is still held in the modern world. Since the Reformation it has continuously lost ground. Yet we cannot deny that this belief and its full acceptance has always been the mark of the genuine Christian, unless we prefer to use terms like Christianity in a deliberately vague and non-committal way.

The modern view, recommending Christianity as an appropriate political tool, is an ineffective and slightly dishonest approach to the religious problem. The Christian religion cannot be called in as a Cinderella to clear up some worldly mess. It is a vain hope trying to revive the authority of the Church by making her show a growing concern about political and social problems. Why should a scheme of social reform be called Christian if no principle peculiar to Christianity is involved? And why should we expect people to take a fresh interest in the Church that supports such schemes? Religion does not enter into the life of a people in that way and we must realize that the vigour of the Christian faith will not be at our disposal just because we feel it would be a good thing if it were.

This state of affairs has frequently led to the accusation that genuine Christians are bad citizens. One might almost call this the classical anti-Christian argument. It has been put forward by Celsus and other defenders of ancient Paganism; it appeared again in the controversy of later centuries. Machiavelli used it; so did Nietzsche; and Gibbon must have believed it. These men regarded the Christians as weaklings and traitors abandoning the common cause and seeking refuge in their religion. They considered Christian fortitude a purely passive virtue, which makes men suffer willingly but gives them no stimulus to act and to check evil in public life. It is certainly possible to gather historical evidence which supports this thesis. There have been representative Christians who considered the world at large the Devil's domain—a total mess, and they maintained that there was nothing to be done about it. Luther himself was one of them. We must therefore ask bluntly: Is

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Celsus' argument true? To begin with, the civic virtues are certainly not a Christian prerogative. The state can be defended and the common cause conscientiously and competently served and guarded by men who do not believe in Christ. The Christian apologist who attributes social and political decline entirely to the abandonment of religion over-plays his hand. Surely, the question is not whether only Christians are good citizens but rather whether Christianity disregards and destroys the civic virtues or not. The position of the Christian in the world is open to misinterpretations because his primary allegiance is not political. The 'fall of the city' which is the supreme disaster in the eyes of most of its defenders is not the same to him. He claims to be consoled even in such calamities. It is, I think, this attitude (due to double allegiance) which the non-Christian patriot resents. He distrusts his Christian fellow citizen because he realizes that the patriotic grief and concern of the Christian (though it need not be less sincere) is quite definitely different in character from his own. It excludes despair. Is it therefore void of true loyalty? Certainly not necessarily. One might even conclude that the conquest of despair (if it be really achieved and not an empty claim) ought to give the Christian an almost unconquerable fortitude. He ought to be, because of this endowment, the man who carries on. He will cheerfully labour amidst ruins when human devices fail. Nothing seems more opposed to this spirit than a barren traditionalism, an attempt to cling to broken things and to preserve them though they have become useless. But one must add that the genuine revolutionary outlook, the wish to make a fundamentally new departure, is also incompatible with the Christian attitude. Christians are restorers, even if their methods should be drastically new.

When Benedict of Nursia went to his mountain retreat near Subiaco, he did what a public-spirited man would certainly have condemned. His family traditions, his education and training, the desperate needs of the time, were all pointing in a very different direction, urging him on to step forward and play his part in active life at such a time of calamity. Yet the rule of Saint Benedict, the fruit of his seclusion, was undoubtedly a more effective and practical contribution than anything he could have done as a politician or as a soldier. The contemplative spirit is of course not the prerogative of the monastic orders. Monks, after all, were originally laymen trying to live the right and orderly human life in spite of all the overwhelming difficulties which a disintegrating society put in their way. Their solution cut right across the acute problems of the day and seemed to ignore them. In times of chaos and disorder, these men wanted to save the essentials of life and it is, to say the least, interesting and instructive to see what they chose. They abandoned arms and weapons, Romans

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though they were, and turned to manual work and religious contemplation. We need not approve of their choice yet we must grasp their motive and appreciate their success. It is befitting now that ancient Monte Cassino has been destroyed, to express the gratitude which Europe owes to the Benedictines. They were defenders of the norm, upholding laws which they considered more fundamental than those which Rome had given. They may well be called the Fathers of Europe.

It would be wrong, therefore, to look upon monasticism as being essentially an historical manifestation, firmly fixed in its traditions, almost fossilized. There is another aspect, revealing the transparency of the monastic ideal and its original impulse that can well detach itself even from the most venerable and ancient forms of expression. The tranquil succeed where politicians and men of affairs labour in vain. They keep the world stable and sane. To conclude this argument: Celsus is wrong. There is no vital Christian principle that could be called definitely irreconcilable with true citizenship. Christianity is well equipped not only to maintain but also to restore civic health and normal life under conditions which seem desperate. It is most at home in the private sphere, in family life, in the narrow domain of actual neighbourly contacts. There it has established and developed fundamental responsibilities. Yet it does not draw its strength from political ideas and conceptions. Therefore it cannot hope to regain spiritual vigour through political or social activity.

Later generations have praised Luther because he proclaimed—so they said—the freedom of conscience. If freedom of conscience means that man is ultimately his own master, 'the captain of his soul' then there can be no doubt that Luther would have emphatically rejected this idea. He believed that Man was only living in accordance with his true nature if he were in a state of obedience. The will of God was revealed—so he thought—in Scripture, Man had to listen and obey. Luther would not have recommended the murmurings of the human heart and the voice of individual conscience as a competent guide. Luther's theology as a whole was a doctrine of submission and was in so far in agreement with Christian tradition.

The reformer realized that the Christian religion is fundamentally authoritative—a strict demand calling for obedience, not a suggestion, one amongst many. Christianity is the belief in the risen Christ. A living authority representing and passing on the testimony of the apostles seems from the logical point of view the only foundation on which so singular a belief can rest. The Bible could hardly be expected to meet this peculiar Christian need, though Luther thought it would. Later generations, separated by centuries from the events which took place in Judea

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at the time of Emperor Tiberius, will not fasten their ultimate hopes upon a miraculous story unless they are convinced that this extraordinary account is true. That conviction, however, cannot be got from the account itself. The evidence presented is inadequate.

The medieval Church had not only sustained the belief in the risen Christ by her living authority, her claims had gone further: the Mass was thought to repeat Christ's sacrifice, thus transforming a singular event said to have happened a long time ago into an equally miraculous and stupendous occurrence of to-day. This emphatic sacramentalism was, however, as stated before, not generally accepted as the true expression of the Christian faith, not even during the Middle Ages. We can easily understand why, in the sixteenth century, the doctrine of the Sacrament became the central point of debate also among Protestants. Sacramentalism allows no half-hearted adherence. It must be either accepted as truth or rejected as humbug. There is no middle course which our judgement could adopt unless we suspend all functions of the mind. The sixteenth century was aware of this alternative. The Reformation swept aside both Church authority and Mass. The consequence was that the death and resurrection of Christ receded into the remote past, no longer intimately bound up with the present. Before long the original centre of the Christian faith was looked upon as a strange event, insufficiently warranted, and the tendency grew to consider it an unessential part of Christian doctrine. This, certainly, was not taught by the reformers, yet their teaching paved the way for theological modernism.

There were further problems connected with Luther's attempt to make the Bible the sole foundation of Christian belief. The Bible speaks with many voices. Who is going to decide which interpretation is right? Harassed by dissenters, Luther at times had to fall back upon his own personal authority. He wrote: 'I do not admit that my doctrine can be judged by anyone, even by the angels.' Indeed, a desperate claim, hardly typical of Luther's well-considered opinions but rather an indication of the difficulties that overwhelmed him. And another outcry is worth remembering: 'If you do not stand firmly by your authority, there will be no Church left in the end.' The flood had already begun to pour in, that was going to sweep away all religious authority.

There was another new departure—the emphatic denial of free will. Erasmus' sagacity clearly perceived the far-reaching practical consequences. Man's utter corruption and sinfulness is a theme of which true Lutherans can never get too much, though the full antinomian conclusions were, as we have seen, avoided. According to this doctrine Man is fundamentally incapable of contributing anything to his own salvation. Luther said: 'Christ stoops and lets the sinner jump on his back and so

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saves him from death and the gaoler.' The reformer was so convinced that the new emphasis which he gave to Christian doctrine was right that he not only rejected as worthless passages in scripture which did not support his teaching (e.g., the Epistle of Saint James) he also interfered with the actual text of the Bible by introducing the word 'only' into his translation of Saint Paul's Letter to the Romans iii, 28: 'Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith *only*' ('allein durch den Glauben'). Having made the thesis of man's utter corruption its very centre Protestant theology soon moved on into gloomier realms of thought. All men alike deserve damnation; God saves and condemns according to his own pleasure. God's majesty grew sombre, even dark. It was only inconsistency (though a sound one) that prevented Protestantism from taking one further step which would have been the proclamation of an inexorable God comparable to the dark deities of Fate in ancient times. But it is true to say that Protestant devotion which is of greater practical importance than theology, was never swallowed up by this vortex of fatalism. Nevertheless it seems that the extravagance and vulnerability of the theological position (on which devotion after all depended) involved the risk of a rather sudden doctrinal breakdown. There was little margin left for repose and quiet assent; either man had to cling with all his might to these disquieting propositions or let them go altogether. Any kind of Puritanism demands continuous and desperate efforts. This rather weakens the coherence of religious tradition.

The dissolution of Christian doctrine was an event which the reformers did not foresee and which they would have abhorred. Yet it seems only natural that one negation should soon produce another one, the second a third one and so on. This outcome—an act of religious spoliation and disinheritance—was certainly not intended but there were (so it seems) no proper means to prevent it once the landslide had been started. To have realized the nature of this momentous development is the merit of Christian archaism, the general position of which will be discussed later.

Protestantism more and more abandoned its doctrinal basis as time went on and reached—in the form of liberal theology—a stage very close to complete evaporation. How did this come about? During the nineteenth century theological scholars set out to invalidate the basic historical documents of the Christian religion, regarding them as unreliable and worthless. This school of thought was most at home in Germany. Its influence was considerable, even outside the academic world. What penetrated into wider circles was a vague and ill-informed spirit of negation. The average man (at least in Protestant Germany) came to believe that the faith of his ancestors had been based on illusions if not lies. The moral teaching of Christianity was still talked of highly. It was

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called sublime but, alas, impracticable. Considerable efforts were made to rescue Christ, or better Jesus, from the debris of the faith and to write his true historical biography. But the search for the Rabbi of Nazareth ended in failure. It proved impossible to distil some kind of undogmatic Christianity from the Gospels which are thoroughly dogmatic from the first to the last verse. Therefore, at a later stage, the Christ of the Creed was again considered not only compatible but identical with the Christ of the Gospels. *Aut Dominus aut nihil*. The modern developments which the schism had inaugurated, have been leading up (most unexpectedly) to this alternative. It is not surprising that Germany should have been the first country where the issue revealed itself unmistakably. Nor need we wonder why outside Germany the alternative should still be considered a rather fantastic, wild statement which is giving things a desperate twist. The hope has not yet been abandoned there that Christianity might be successfully secularized and play a worthy though modest part in a brave new world. It is true, I think, to say that Liberalism has been defeated by now in the sphere of theological controversy. The Confessional Church has returned to the Christ of the Creed as he is revealed in the Bible. That is what the Confessional Church stands for.

The Roman Church has seen to it that her doctrinal deposit was less exposed to the climate of the liberal and agnostic age than the Protestant heritage. Modernism was therefore never a really dangerous enemy. As a movement it could be easily threatened into submission.

What is the situation that confronts us now? Schism exists and seems to be permanent. Its ultimate result was that from the seventeenth century onwards religion was gradually losing its hold on men. Secularism in ever-changing forms and shapes was in ascendancy. It still is. Both denominations were threatened by this rising tide. Protestantism was nearly swamped, the Roman Church was forced into seclusion. Some people believe, however, that the tide has turned. This seems very doubtful. There is certainly a growing readiness to appreciate the formative influence of the Christian faith and the support which it has given and still gives to the whole fabric of civilization. This appreciation, however, though perfectly genuine, will never revive religion. I cannot even imagine that it will pave the way for revival. On the contrary, this purely intellectual perception, though accompanied by real concern, may well dry up the still existing springs of religious life. All it can lead to is some kind of archaism, the pathetic attempt to practise again scrupulously a religion that had already been almost abandoned. We are reminded of Julian the Apostate, and his futile attempt to revive paganism. An even more belated effort was made in the sixth century when the Philosophers of Athens, shortly before Justinian drove them into exile, laboriously

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posed as convinced pagans cherishing all the superstitions and the elaborate ritual of the remotest past.

Religious archaism is, however, in spite of its obvious weakness, not devoid of truth. It contains the element of justified alarm. Plutarch who can be called its prominent Pagan representative wrote: 'You seem to me, Pemptides, to be handling a very big matter and a risky one—or rather, you are discussing what should not be discussed at all, when you question the opinion we hold about the gods, and ask reason and demonstration for everything. For the ancient and ancestral faith is enough . . . it is a common home and an established foundation for all piety; and if in one point its stable and traditional character be shaken and disturbed, it will be undermined and no-one will trust it.'

Plutarch is right; both history and experience prove that religions are fundamentally traditional; they are normally handed down and simply accepted, not chosen by the individual man after scrutinizing tests. Religious assent may be reasonable; but it is not reason and deliberate choice from which its strength is derived. There has never been a religion that could not be denied and rejected without falling into absurdity. The archaist who wants to return to religion cannot, as a rule, regain the unperturbed, sincere confidence which a truly traditional faith bestows. His belief, in spite of its traditional character, is, in his case, the outcome of dispute, doubt, and mental readjustment. A sceptic who is at peace with the world and himself, is presumably more religious (though his piety may be called profane) than an intense convert who has brought his doubts and hesitations to a drastic but not really happy end. Intellectual integrity is a great source of strength and cannot be dispensed with. Our conscience registers every infringement. It is not commendable to drown this warning voice in heavenly music. An element of stress and pain can be discovered in the confessions of converts. Newman's *Apologia*, certainly a great human document, illustrates this point particularly well because Newman, unlike most converts, starts his weary journey as a believer. How much wider is the gulf which an agnostic has to bridge! A complex religious belief, accepted by a man later in life, never seems to have risen before him like the star which the Magi followed. The ceaseless efforts of a scribe are needed in order to collect the evidence from all quarters—such labours are inauspicious.

The danger of Christian archaism is very acute to-day and it will be growing. It is a perilous deadlock indeed fraught with insincerity. The professional keenness of the clergy trying to push ahead whenever there seems a good chance, may well accelerate such undesirable developments. Christian archaism also gets support from other quarters, from connoisseurs and men of culture. They really do not attempt to put

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things right—they are too sceptical. Yet their sense of quality makes them prefer the ancient religion, its philosophy and art, to the crudities of modern secularism and its suburban flavour. Again, such motives are dubious; it is not the connoisseur who will revive Christianity. It would, however, be foolish to generalize. Even the conversion of the connoisseur can be genuine. A few centuries ago the falling away from Christian traditions set in among the highly educated; it has been called 'The treason of the learned—la trahison des clercs'. Has the countermove begun? Are the 'clerks' returning to the faith? Some of the best-known modern Christian apologists—men like Berdyaev or Haecker—are converts and they are men of high culture. It would be rather impudent to label them as connoisseurs and Christian archaists who turn their backs on the modern world because its vulgarity fills them with nausea. There can be no doubt: the intellectual atmosphere has undergone a change and though agnosticism in all its shades is still definitely the mark of modern times, there are currents which flow in the opposite direction.

Germany may well be destined to play an important part in this momentous crisis. For that country ruined by the National Socialists and sullied by their crimes and follies has become, I think, at the same time the centre of the fighting Christian Church. Things have gone further there than anywhere else, also sometimes, as in this case, in a positive sense. Christianity was no longer permitted to continue its slumber and to breathe without choking the air of compromise. The alternative *aut Dominus aut nihil* has forced itself, as an inescapable challenge, upon the minds of men. The new Protestant theology regards the assent: Christ is the Lord, not as the conclusion to which thought and experience have been leading up but as the starting point of Christian life. Note the reversal of widely accepted principles! The bridges have been broken that lead to the familiar shores of humanism. It is no longer man's duty to investigate and to choose, touring round, like a critical customer, from the Buddhist department to the Christian stores. The doctrine of obedience replaces the doctrine of autonomy and all compromises are rejected. Nobody can fail to realize that an attitude of life based on such conceptions and tried in the furnace of persecution is a new departure within the sphere of modernity though hardly a novelty in the history of our religion. Religious archaism is not the motive power behind this theocentric venture. Personal encounter with evil enthroned has induced men to abandon the humanist ideas which so many generations cherished as indisputable principles. Convictions of such origin and import must be taken seriously even if we do not share them.

It is, of course, possible, at least not absurd to regard this momentous change as a sign of intellectual decline. Nor would it be nonsensical to

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maintain that the pressure of disaster (such as Germany experienced) does not necessarily create conditions favourable to the search of truth. *Aut Dominus aut nihil* is a point blank assertion; what on earth can compel a man to accept it if he feels disinclined to do so but rather prefers to pursue his way unworried by that dilemma? Agnostics are perfectly entitled to reject the 'proof of power'—the effectiveness of dogmatic faith offered as a token of its truth. They may say, perhaps with a sigh, that human nature, being what it is, seems to need religious illusions in order to bear the extreme miseries of life. Such arguments, however, do not alter the fact that religion has risen from the grave which the Secularists had already sealed and considered no longer worth guarding. The empty tomb is to be found to-day in the land of schism.

Therefore it seems shortsighted to look upon Germany as being nothing more than the stables of Augeas which will have to be cleansed eventually by squads summoned from outside. To be the centre of the Christian Church is, however, not a privilege to be envied, judging by ordinary standards. The triumph of evil is its necessary correlate.

'The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.'

Outside Germany, in the allied countries, Christians have not been tested. Many of them are deeply concerned and stirred but they are onlookers watching the turmoil from a 'balcony', to use the phrase of John A. Mackay. They base their Christian hopes on the victory of the allied nations and during the war they prepared themselves for the tasks that have to be tackled later. The German refugees are in a very similar position. They have escaped from the furnace, now they are onlookers. It would be a pathetic mistake if they believed that they are destined to be the wise instructors and tutors of their own tormented nation. Refugees who have been brought back to their native country by foreign armies never count. The instinct of the common man is against them. The gallant resistance of the Churches in occupied Europe was certainly part of the real struggle; these Churches were no longer on the 'balcony', they were on the 'road'. The defence of their faith, however, happened to coincide with the demands of their patriotic self-respect. Patriotism is a formidable ally when the ruthless invader has conquered the country.

In Germany the champion of the Christian cause was prepared not only to be persecuted but also to be stigmatized as an unpatriotic traitor. All the mighty torrents of nationalist mass emotion were against him. He died without glory an ignominious death, despised and forgotten. This is indeed an ultimate test because utter failure is bravely accepted and it is in such darkness of disaster and hopelessness that the

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Christian faith has always claimed to be the light. The conflict had become grim and real, far removed from the intellectual sphere. Men had to make up their minds and decide, knowing well that they could count upon no assistance if they stood up against the demands of the tyranny. Numbers do not count in such critical hours. The most decisive events are not in the news. More than 1,700 years ago, yet under similar circumstances, Tertullian wrote in his apologia: 'Nothing whatever is accomplished by your cruelties each more exquisite than the last. We multiply whenever we are mown down by you; the blood of the Christians is seed.' These are stern words. If men could have it their own way they would presumably prefer a more amiable road to rejuvenation and buy the new life at a lower price. But the student of the genuine Christian documents cannot fail to see that the full reward of Christian happiness which has always been so puzzling a secret is only promised to those who do not fear the torture chamber. The fortitude of modern Christians in face of cruel tyranny has surprised the world and won the admiration even of those who do not consider readiness for martyrdom a decisive test of truth. The fortitude itself is real, no doubt can be cast on it. We learn what men can bravely endure—a profitable lesson at a time when so much is said about decay and decline. The Christians in Germany were not capable of preventing the growth of Hitlerism; but when the movement had succeeded many of them manned the last ditch, both Protestants and Catholics alike.

Thus the two hostile brothers have met on 'the road' amidst misery and disaster. They became the close companions of men who were no Christians, of Jews and atheists who shared the same dark fate. An onlooker should not even attempt to fathom the experience which common suffering in Hitler's prisons and concentration camps forced upon men—silence is the proper response.

II

THE RELIGIOUS WARS AND THE RISE OF SECULARISM

Germany had brought about the schism of the sixteenth century, it was her work but she had to pay for it excessively; more, I think, than any other European nation. The immediate results of the religious dissensions were the religious wars. Debate and controversy had led to a stalemate. Neither side felt capable of winning over its opponent. Out of this situation arose the will and readiness to use force on a large scale, to crush the skulls that harboured heretical thoughts, as there seemed no other way of getting rid of this dangerous poison which—so both sides argued—was ruining Man's soul. The spirit of persecution which is the core of religious war was not in itself the evil fruit of the schism. The readiness to persecute, the belief in persecution as a competent method and even as a duty, was prevalent right at the beginning of the struggle: it had been inherited from the later Middle Ages.

Christian intolerance is a singular phenomenon in human history. Theology started the greatest argument that ever arose among men but even the claim of absolute truth, though certainly a challenge and therefore a cause of friction, does not explain the spirit of persecution and the extraordinary lack of urbanity. Unfavourably does Christianity compare, in that respect, with Buddhism which has never threatened anybody. Buddhist urbanity is supreme. From where, then, did this uncharitable spirit proceed that has marred the annals of European history? The Jewish scriptures full of religious zeal and vindictiveness had been accepted by the Church as part of her sacred canon. The book of Revelation can compete with the most violent passages in the Hebrew prophets. Saint John, the apostle of love, wrote the merciless words: 'If anyone comes to you not having this teaching do not take him into your house or give him words of love.' Had the good Samaritan acted upon this principle (which Christendom accepted) he would have catechized the victim of the robbers before offering his help. It must therefore be admitted that intolerance was deeply engrained.¹ The

¹ The "wrath of doctrine" which the Buddhists wisely reject, was eagerly accepted, as a weapon, by Christians of all Churches. According to the Old Testament, cataclysms and excessive punishments indicate Jehovah's angry presence. Such visions filled the religious imagination of the West.

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Schism provided only a new opportunity for indulging in feelings of hatred fired by religion. The Renaissance Church, faithful to her traditions, had no scruples on this point; and she would have burnt Luther as readily in 1521 as she had burnt Savonarola in 1498. Persecution had to be postponed for purely political reasons because the secular authority, Charles V, was not available to carry out the will of the Church, which was also his own. He was engaged in wars against France which lasted over twenty years, from 1521 to 1544. This gave Protestantism the necessary time to grow and to consolidate. Towards the middle of the sixteenth century only a mighty military enterprise could have attempted to wipe out the Lutheran Church. The half-way measures which the ageing Emperor adopted, his war against the League of Schmalkalde and the Interim were futile and ineffective. The Peace of Augsburg which granted toleration had to be concluded.

This peace, however, was a truce. Both sides were lining up for battle. The spirit of persecution was infinitely stronger on the Catholic side. This need not cause surprise. The post Tridentine Roman Church had confidently returned to the ruthless and self-assertive principles of her medieval tradition. In 1542 the Papal Inquisition was re-established; stakes were lit and torture was applied *ad maiorem Dei gloriam*.

What was the attitude of Protestantism? At the beginning of his career Luther maintained that heretics should only be fought by arguments. 'Otherwise', he said, 'the executioner would be the wisest theologian on earth.' During the crisis of 1525—the Peasants' War—he came to the conviction that doctrines which caused political disorder should be punished as high treason. The Reformer sanctioned and rather encouraged the persecution of Anabaptists and kindred sectarians in Protestant towns like Nuremberg and Augsburg; perfectly harmless people were tortured in order to extract revolutionary opinions. After the drama of Münster (1534–5) Luther approved (though always reluctantly) of the execution of quite unpolitical 'heretics' because they disturbed the unity of the Church. This is an opinion which every Grand Inquisitor would willingly endorse. Although we must deplore Luther's change of mind, one point should not be missed: Protestantism persecuted inconsistently and sporadically, it never put up a powerful elaborate machinery like the Inquisition. The Roman Church persecuted vigorously without any hesitations or scruples. There was, therefore, a remarkable difference in degree between the two Churches. The feeling of hatred, however, was presumably the same on both sides. Studying the controversy of the early sixteenth century we need not wonder at the storm which was to follow and actually gathered its strength from the venomous fanaticism which that debate had fostered. Listen to this

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passage written by Luther in 1545, one year before his death: 'Oh take your chance, emperor, kings, princes, and lords and whoever can grip and seize, God will not bless lazy hands! Take away from the Pope Rome and all his Papal possessions! He has stolen it all! And then the Pope, the Cardinals and his whole set should be hanged, the tongues of the blasphemers pulled out by the roots and nailed to the gallows in the way they put their seals to bulls. All this would be little compared with their blasphemy and idolatry.' And this is a passage from an earlier pamphlet: 'If we strike thieves with the gallows, robbers with the sword, heretics with fire, why do we not much more attack in arms these masters of perdition, these cardinals, these popes and all this sink of the Roman Sodom . . . and wash our hands in their blood.' Luther did not often encourage violence, only now and then, but he did it savagely and without restraint. The violence which he and others invoked was to come and it descended upon Germany in the form of the Thirty Years War, that mighty conflagration fed by the fuel of hatred which had been accumulating for so long a time.

It has been the fashion lately among authors and historians to belittle the devastating consequences of the Thirty Years War upon Germany. One has of course to admit that the statistical evidence of destruction and depopulation is extremely unreliable though local research has arrived at some definite and valid conclusions. But we can safely discard these debatable points and yet gain a true picture of what the Thirty Years War meant. The contemporary evidence, the chronicles and literature are highly revealing. The character of that age we know, the misery, the cruelty and the sounds of sorrow. It is worth remembering that under the stress of this hard experience, when a whole nation lay prostrate and defenceless, the best German hymns were written. Some of them are too long for our taste and contain passages which we find rather trying, but there are many verses of such grandeur and simplicity that not even the greatest German poets, including Goethe, have been able to surpass them. According to the valid rule *lex orandi lex credendi* we should regard this religious poetry as the true manifestation of the living Christian faith. Amid terror and disaster, Christianity—the hidden Church—was forcibly represented in Germany, not by the crusading armies and their plotting chiefs but by men and women who endured with an unbroken spirit, sustained by their belief. If there has ever been a war that ended in futility it was this one. In 1648 the Peace of Augsburg was confirmed. At the end of the struggle the religious position in Europe was the same as it had been before. Nothing had been changed and nothing had been settled. Religious fanaticism died from sheer exhaustion.

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The political aspect of the great contest reveals tendencies that determined the course of history almost up to modern times. The foreign policy of France framed and guided first by Henry IV, and later (after a period of muddle and indecision) by Richelieu, deliberately exploited the religious tension in Germany and Europe in order to raise the French monarchy above Spain and Austria. It seems a strange inconsistency that the first Bourbon king, who lives in history as a benefactor of his country, having brought the dreadful religious wars to an end, should have seriously contemplated a political scheme that could only be carried out if there was to be another religious war, this time on a larger scale and outside France. Henry fully realized that he could not fight the House of Habsburg without allies. He therefore planned to rally the necessary confederates under the banner of Protestantism. The quarrel about Jülich-Cleves (1609) developed into a major European crisis through the interference of France and would have led to war had not Henry been assassinated when he was about to leave his capital and join his troops.

Eight years later the religious tension led to the outbreak of a Protestant rebellion in Bohemia. The policy of the insurgents was to extend the range of the conflict by winning the support of other powers. This attempt failed. King James I was not prepared to be dragged into that affair, being wiser, for once, than his parliament. He did not support his son-in-law, the newly elected King of Bohemia, save by ineffectual diplomatic mediation. The belated Mansfield expedition can be left out of account. France could not even be approached. Marie of Medici, then regent of France, was pro-Spanish and had entirely abandoned the ambitious schemes of her husband. It was Richelieu who took them up again.

The great Cardinal succeeded. He enlarged the scope of the war, he interfered twice when the struggle seemed to be petering out. In 1630 he made Sweden enter the war and invade Pomerania, he duped the Emperor and the German princes by urging them on to dismiss Wallenstein, and in 1635, after the battle of Nördlingen, France entered the war herself, preventing again the outbreak of peace so much feared by Richelieu. The prolonged struggle exhausted the resources of the House of Habsburg; from the political point of view the Thirty Years War was a war of attrition fought on German soil by France and her allies against Austria and Spain. When the Pope heard the news of Richelieu's death he remarked: 'If there be a God the Cardinal will have much to answer for. If there be none, well, he lived a successful life.' Successful he certainly was, but his political achievements and even more so the political tradition which he created, were of a dubious character. His was the

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dream of French hegemony firmly established on Germany's weakness and dissolution. The constitutional crisis of the Holy Roman Empire, the weakness of the central executive power, was an affair of old standing dating back to the Middle Ages. France made this state of affairs the corner-stone of her European system; she did everything in her power to preserve it. The policy of domination which Richelieu and Mazarin had started was carried on under more favourable circumstances by Louis XIV. When the menace of further French advance had been checked by the Great European Alliance under the leadership of William III it was not the appetite of France that had gone, but the adequate means to get what she desired were no longer fully at her disposal. The great popularity which Frederick the Great gained through his victory over the French in the battle of Rossbach (1757) can only be explained by the accumulated experience of a nation which had been exposed to aggression and interference and had not been able to defend herself properly. Public opinion did not realize that Frederick was not inclined to defend German interests. His political testament (1752), which Bismarck thought unfit for publication, reveals the king's indifference.

About fifty years later Napoleon reassumed the policy of French absolutism on a larger scale. His 'Confederation of the Rhine' (1805) corresponds to Mazarin's Rhenish Alliance (1658); the idea behind it was the same. By placing a number of German states under French protectorate, Napoleon broke up the shattered and loose framework of the Holy Roman Empire. It was the final blow. The abdication of the Emperor (who then assumed the title 'Emperor of Austria') was the immediate consequence. But the turning point in the history of the Empire, one might better say its actual demise, lay further back. The Treaty of Westphalia granted independence to the German princes, the right to conduct their own foreign policy, and made any further attempt to strengthen the Emperor's executive power impossible. Thus sufficient care was taken to forestall a German Richelieu, at least for the time being.

In actual fact, the potential German Richelieu had already made his appearance when the Thirty Years war was at its height; but he failed. He was Albrecht von Wallenstein. It was a most appropriate choice when Schiller made him the hero of his greatest historical drama; for Wallenstein is indeed a tragic figure, not only as a character but also as a statesman. The man who for a short time (less than six years) seemed to be holding the fate of Germany in his hands, was soon afterwards hardly remembered, and if at all, then as a meteoric adventurer and a political gambler. He was that too, yet he signifies more. Wallenstein was a *condottiere* like so many other leading men of the time. Yet his plans

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(fundamentally personal) happened to be of great national importance. What were they? First, he wanted to make the Emperor the true master in Germany. The permanent constitutional crisis of the Holy Roman Empire, already mentioned, had been unsuccessfully tackled by Maximilian I and his successor, it had been accentuated by the Reformation which gave the opposition of the princes a new rallying point. After the conquest of Protestant Germany in 1628 it was within Wallenstein's reach to solve this problem by imposing his will. Yet Vienna wanted to exploit the victories of the general in a different way. The speedy reconversion of Protestant Germany was the Emperor's main objective. Hence the edict of Restitution. Wallenstein disapproved of it and recommended at least a more cautious procedure. The dismissal of Wallenstein in 1630 was a victory of the German princes over the Emperor—the threat to their independence had been removed.

Wallenstein's second scheme (after he had been recalled to fight Gustavus Adolphus) was very intricate; his treacherous and deceitful diplomacy obscured and complicated the issue. The gist of it, however, was simple enough. He wanted to extricate Germany from the war. Spain was to be abandoned and the alliance between Sweden and the German Protestants split by granting religious toleration. All this was political and strategical commonsense. It hit the nail on the head. Sweden could not have carried on without support; the whole enterprise of Gustavus Adolphus had been based on that assumption. Even the fantastic embroideries of Wallenstein's scheme, the capture of Constantinople and, to a lesser degree, the suggested naval policy based on Baltic ports, should not be allowed to obscure the fundamental soundness of the plan. It will be noted that the policy which Wallenstein proposed was indeed the most effective counterstroke against Richelieu and the 'Great Design'. The French cardinal, not Gustavus Adolphus, was Wallenstein's true antagonist. Had the German succeeded, the history of Europe would have taken a different course. There would have been no Bismarck, no modern Reich, no Hitler. For the Austro-Prussian conflict and the novel traditions which proceeded from it were the outcome of Germany's political disintegration, exploited by France. Germany would have been united under Austrian rule at that early stage. There would have been a modernized Holy Roman Empire, the constitutional crisis having been overcome by force of arms and the bitterness of defeat removed by generous toleration. La Rochelle and its sequence would have found its parallel on a larger scale.

The stupendous failure of Wallenstein was not due to circumstances alone. He was in spite of his many extraordinary gifts not quite the man that the task demanded. Unlike Richelieu who was a loyal servant of his

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king and country, Wallenstein only served himself. Hence the Emperor's justified distrust. The lack of loyalty in Wallenstein's character seems to have been related to another weakness: the lack of persistence. Ambitious though he was, he had no firm grip on affairs. He got irritated, and turned his back on enterprises which he regarded, after all, as little more than his toys. Wallenstein had a proud but weary soul. Men of such make-up do not build states. When the assassins broke into his room at Eger, he offered no resistance but spread his arms to receive the deadly blow. His last word was 'Quartier' (mercy).

After the murder of Wallenstein, the Emperor hesitatingly adopted at least some points of Wallenstein's programme. Toleration was offered. Things went favourably, so much so that Richelieu was compelled to enter the war. From that moment onwards the German prospects grew darker, in the end they were hopeless. France and Sweden won the war. The road was clear for further advance: Louis XIV came and with him for the first time in European history the danger of French hegemony.

There is one conclusion to which our survey leads up: the foreign policy of France from Richelieu onwards paved the way for Prussia's ascendancy. The welcome which many Germans gave to Prussia was a sign of relief and satisfaction: a German power seemed to be rising that could hold its own. Before turning to Prussia it will be necessary to give an idea of the atmosphere of the age which witnessed these momentous changes in European power politics.

The mark of the period that followed the religious wars was the rise of secularism. Religious fervour died out, or to be more accurate, it receded. It is not easy for modern men to grasp the full intensity of hope and expectation with which people explored the new avenue that had opened before them. Turning their backs on the Churches men felt sure that they would be able to arrange their own affairs satisfactorily, relying upon their reason and the promptings of human nature. Disillusionment has nowadays weakened this hope, but 200 years ago secular optimism was so widespread and virile that the actual literary expression which it found gives an inadequate indication of its real force. It was taken for granted, therefore it needed little emphasis. Rousseau's political writings illustrate this point well.

An attempt was made to find a substitute for the discredited Church religion. Eighteenth-century Deism can be considered a half-way house between Christianity and secularism fully developed. Emotionally it was a residue; intellectually it was a set of rather vague ideas which (many of its promoters hoped) would help to keep people in obedience to the moral law. It was considered risky to dispense with the religious sanction of good human conduct. Voltaire strongly emphasized this point. He

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did not care much for God, but he cared a great deal for peace, order, and justice. Rousseau was more emotional. 'I believe in God,' he wrote, 'because the state of doubt is a state too violent for my soul, . . . because a thousand preferences win me over to the most consoling side.' This is not a really convincing, not even a very respectable approach to the problem of God's existence, but what Rousseau called his 'proof by feeling' is rather modern.

Deism has not passed away; it is still with us though its jargon has changed and its tenets have become very unsubstantial, almost non-existent. It is known to-day as religious broadmindedness which declines to commit itself to any definite belief yet enjoys (if life runs smoothly) a religious sentiment that neither needs nor acknowledges any object. This kind of religious feeling is purely secular; it compares unfavourably with clear-minded atheism, and it is certainly a poor substitute for the ancient faith which it so confidently regards as inferior. The utter weakness of Deism reveals its lack of substance. Deism has never been able to deflect the course of events once the trend towards Secularism began to develop. This did not affect the popularity of this noncommittal and obliging religion. The crisis of the twentieth century, however, forced men to throw away all trappings and thoroughly destroyed the reputation of Deism and its modern derivative, at least in those countries which underwent severe ordeals. Religious broadmindedness can be written off as a constructive force. It has no contribution to make because it is out of touch with the actual problems. For example: what would a joint communion attended by broadminded people of different denominations signify? The answer must be: nothing. The Church universal cannot be secured by friendliness and doctrinal indifference. The faith will have to be accentuated, not diluted.

Proper secularism which attempts no compromise is a much more serious adversary. What does secularism stand for? It seems possible to get down to the root of the problem by investigating the basic decision that underlies secularism in all its forms. One can express the attitude in one sentence: Man is sufficient to himself. As Nietzsche said: 'All the beauty and dignity which we have attributed to real and imaginary things I will claim back as the property and creation of man, as his best self-justification.' He expressed the same thought in his *Zarathustra* giving it the character of a flourish: 'Dead are all the Gods; now we desire the superman to live.' Nietzsche was perhaps the most determined secularist in the history of European philosophy, the man who wrote: 'Who is more godless than I that I may benefit from his teaching?' The men more godless than Nietzsche were soon to come, but it is doubtful whether the philosopher would have welcomed the members of a

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modern Anti-God League as his brethren and tutors. Nietzsche's main spiritual force was his sincerity. He considered his doctrine an urgent practical and personal affair, part of his life, a decision. His philosophy (in spite of the Dionysus passages) is emphatically profane, yet animated (one might almost say deranged) by wild over-excitement. This element won the upper hand and turned the great man into an eccentric—a false prophet. The conception of the Superman threw everything out of gear; Nietzsche lost contact with the normal. He is a philosopher who does not seem to have fulfilled his promise.

There are many beautiful and pure expressions of profane piety in Nietzsche's writings; the calm and grateful acceptance of life finds a powerful advocate. The books which he wrote between 1879 and 1883 (they are his best) seemed to indicate that he was gradually developing an eminently practical epicurean philosophy which might have given modern secularism the new inspiration that was so badly needed. At that time he formulated his philosophical task as follows: 'It is my purpose to remove from human existence something of its heartbreaking and cruel character.' Could there be a nobler endeavour? Later on Nietzsche became a sort of prophet. The ardent attempt to follow breathlessly the spectre of a higher, entirely fictitious race introduced an element of desperate and exasperating futility. The mutterings about the 'beast of prey' are downright silly. More than that—they are wicked.

It would, of course, be wrong to say that belief in Man's autonomy must necessarily lead to Nietzsche's philosophy or something like it. The actual doctrines may differ as widely as Nietzsche's teaching differs from Kant's, but the basic decision behind them is the same: 'I must rely upon myself, there is no other comforter or guide.' Little will be achieved if this remains just an opinion but if this outlook affects the will, if, as we say, man lives up to it, then secularism comes into its own and can develop into something forcible and strong. It is strength sustained through pride. Ancient philosophies, notably Stoicism, have proved that this is a way of life, that it can lead to great and noble achievements. Needless to emphasize that it is antagonistic to the Christian faith, incompatible with it. Christians will certainly regard the attitude of determined self-reliance as contrary to truth and as an abomination, no matter what it achieves. Yet they will readily admit that secularism at its best has most remarkable resources at its disposal. Bruno Bauer remarked in his book *Christ and the Caesars* that the 'hour of the Stoics' might strike again. 'The sword of the Stoics', he wrote, 'will flash again in the hands of their successors whenever political power establishes itself (as a tyranny) exploiting the fact of an old order crumbling away.' Theodor Haecker, who, as a Catholic, regards Stoic-

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ism as an insufficient ideal wrote nevertheless in 1931: 'Europe could certainly be content to-day if it had Stoics like Epictetus or Seneca or Marcus Aurelius.' Yet how shallow and weary is Marcus Aurelius compared with Saint Paul!

Turning from these more general observations to the historical survey of facts, we notice with surprise that modern secularism, in spite of many endeavours, has failed to produce a philosophy of life which might be of real practical use and might grow into a formative force such as religion had been in centuries of the past. There were, of course, many mass movements, powerful torrents which greatly influenced the course of events. Having reached their climax they usually passed away rather quickly and were replaced by something else. This is, however, not what we are looking out for just now. We want to discover forces which enable man to withstand such torrents, for that is the crucial problem of the time. People talk about the collective age that has now dawned upon us. Exactly; but one should not give this term a positive significance. The collective age is a sorry sight. Its true representatives among the rank and file have lost all independence of life and judgement and have come to accept crowd emotions (and some kind of security) as a substitute for personal freedom. They hardly realize what they have given up. Esau is the true patron of the collective age; for he sold his birth-right for bread and a pottage of lentils. What is sadder still, he became the victim of a swindle.

Citizenship is based ultimately on the individual man and his sense of responsibility. The civic virtues, though their concern is the common cause, are not therefore collectivist; they do not derive their strength from agreement with others. Cato of Utica was well entitled to regard himself, in the hour of defeat, as the representative of Rome. He certainly does not deserve Mommsen's derision, but rather the admiration that was readily given throughout the centuries. He set the example of true patriotism when he defied, as a single man, the success of victorious forces which he considered antagonistic to the well-being of the State. Sound politics cannot be the work of men who need, above all, the stimulus of public consent and mass emotions. Both religion and philosophy (even more than citizenship) are primarily concerned with man as a solitary being, not as a member of some crowd. The pearl of great price is found by single men not by a treasure-hunting party. Nor do philosophers animate each other, walking about in herds. It may be said (in objection to this) that religion is first and foremost a corporate experience. Christianity, it is true, claimed to be the establishment of a new society and to the early Christians a religious life detached from the community of believers—the dead and living alike—would have seemed

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barren and incongruous. The Church, indeed, *was* Christianity; to discriminate between the two is a modern mode of thought. After the Schism (and because of it) the Church lost her supermundane majesty and was no longer regarded with confidence as the vanguard of the world beyond. Therefore the genuine corporate experience became precarious, so much so that men in modern times have to fall back upon a position of isolation which is not without peril. Yet it is not for the first time that Christianity dwells in the waste land. At the end of the last century, on the edge of the Libyan desert, three half-decayed fragments of papyrus were found, probably part of an amulet. On them were written words of Christ which are not in the canonical gospels. One of these sayings runs like this: 'Where there are two, they are not without God; and where man is alone, I am with him.'

What has been said about religion applies also to philosophy. The test for secularism as a philosophy and a true rival of religion must therefore be the independence and fortitude which it gives to the individual. In this respect secularism has failed. Many would say it has failed necessarily because it is not based on truth, but the historian, avoiding the discussion of principles, is, on the strength of historical evidence, entitled to suspend his judgement or even to share Bruno Bauer's hopes and to believe at least in the possibility of a really forcible secular philosophy. Such a philosophy comparable to stoicism has not arisen in modern Europe and there are no signs so far that it will. Yet it might—this possibility cannot be excluded. It is necessary to-day to stress this point and to keep an open mind.

We are frequently told that our civilization has been moulded by the Christian religion and will therefore die once the faith be abandoned. A speedy return to Christianity is recommended as the only solution. There is, however, not enough evidence for so sweeping a generalization. The civilization of Europe derived its strength and character from many different sources, the religious influence was but one amongst them. It is by no means easy to decide how far this influence went, even during the formative periods of European history. There are also many incidents which indicate a definitely harmful effect of religious ideas. What reasons have we to state categorically that only religion can build up human fortitude? No modern observer will fail to appreciate the strength and courage that religious belief has given to men at a time when support was urgently needed. Yet there is enough historical evidence to prove that a stern and noble morality safeguarding man's independence can spring up from secular soil as the fruit of sound patriotism and citizenship. The feebleness of modern secularism is too poor a fact to be used as an argument against secularism on principle. The diagnosis of our

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time which many Christian apologists offer, is therefore dubious, so are their practical conclusions. The return to religion is, as has been explained in Chapter I, a perilous journey. The dangers of religious archaism are manifold. We may even venture to say that it seems easier, in times of decline, to build up again the civic virtues on their proper individualistic basis than to bring about a return to religion, not of individuals but of masses.

The alarming aspect of our present situation is that the power of resistance and defiance seems to be steadily weakening. There are no indisputable lines of defence where a stand will be made should a formidable challenge arise. We have not seen the last of those mass movements which attempt to give new meaning to life, winning the support of the uprooted. What has happened in Germany will not be properly understood if it is regarded as a prodigious event that might have happened on the moon. It was a consummation of tendencies most of which are at work everywhere. The popular instinct is quite right when it concentrates on the question: Why was Hitler insufficiently resisted?

This is, indeed, the crucial problem, but it is in its wider aspects a European problem. Why was there that astounding impotence in the German academic world? Why did the Universities, the centres of learning and culture, collapse and surrender to the invading enemy at the time when unknown parsons, deserted by the Church authorities, began to rally their congregations and put up resistance? The answer is: Humanism, culture, and refinement, all the achievements of modern secularism which were at hand, provided neither courage nor inspiration—the sword of the Stoics was not in the hands of the intellectual leaders. In the hour of danger it was the much despised Church and not the University where the spirit of man found refuge. To extract the European Universities from the grip of the national sovereign governments and to give them an independent almost extraterritorial status would certainly help to break the yoke of State allegiance that has been imposed upon learning. A time might come again when men like Erasmus can travel from one country to the other and feel equally at home at the Universities of Bologna, Basle, and Oxford, enjoying full membership everywhere. Such a change in status would be a remarkable reform though it cannot be expected to overcome automatically the intrinsic weakness of modern secularism.

We have moved far away from our starting point. We have, however, reached one conclusion which must be kept in mind: secularism has weakened man's power of resistance, perhaps not necessarily but in actual fact.

III

PRUSSIA

We must now turn our attention back to the political scene. The main effect of Prussia on German politics can be briefly summed up like this : during the eighteenth century Prussia caused a conflict of patriotic loyalties in Germany through the military achievements of Frederick the Great. Austria, who had represented the German nation for centuries, was successfully challenged. In the second half of the nineteenth century Prussia conquered Germany and founded the Reich. A new and most formidable state came into being and from that time onwards European politics have revolved round this new portentous centre of power.

Whatever Hitler may stand for, he was certainly able to identify himself and his movement with the Reich ; all its resources were at his disposal. This was not sheer accident. The Reich seems to have been a particularly suitable receptacle for the spirit which National Socialism wanted to instil. Therefore it is a pertinent question to ask : What is this Reich ? What forces have built it up ? What is its significance ? It has often been maintained that the clue to the whole story is Prussia. Prussia is evil (so it was said) and she has led the Germans astray. This thesis is untenable. It over-simplifies. Things are not quite as simple as that. What, then, is the truth of the matter ?

If the mistake be avoided to read the present back into the past, the consolidation of Prussia (during the early eighteenth century) cannot be considered more than a singularly successful political and military enterprise of the kind which absolutism then attempted everywhere. The pattern was the same ; Prussian competence was superior to the rest. Prussia's ruthlessness was drastic, but still in keeping with the political usage of the time. Accomplices were not difficult to find, in 1740 France ; in 1772 Russia. In England, at that time, Frederick was not regarded as a criminal but as a hero. The true founder of Prussia was Friedrich Wilhelm I. No need to go further back. The Teutonic knights are as dead as the Crusaders ; there is no living tradition going back to those remote times, though many attempts have been made by friend and foe alike to prove the contrary. It is the soldier king, that boorish eccentric, who for the first time in history embodied the Prussian spirit. The further developments, however, the Prussian conquest of Germany and the

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deflection not only of Germany but also of Prussia, were not written in the stars. Things might have taken quite a different turn. 1815, and to a lesser degree, 1848 were such decisive moments. Their importance will be explained later.

Prussia's militarism was fraught with many dangers as all militaristic systems are. First, it is practically impossible that competent training for war, assuming the highest place of honour among a nation's activities, should not foster bellicose tendencies. This applies particularly to officers. It seems unnatural that a highly trained soldier should not long for the moment when all his accomplishments would be put to the real test. There may be many other genuine motives which make such a man suppress his longing for war or keep it secret but it would be foolish to deny that such dreams are the necessary product of a highly developed militaristic system.

Without bellicose instincts being alive in a decisive number of people a war could never be brought off. Men who are quite obsessed by the idea of war and its grandeur may of course talk most fluently about their peaceful intentions; this well-known hypocrisy is a concession which they have to make to their unperverted fellow men. Militarism does not only stimulate warlike appetites in influential quarters, it weakens deliberately the power of resistance among genuine peace lovers. How is this achieved? This brings us to the second point. Militaristic systems exploit the moral appeal of the soldierly virtues. More than that: people are made to forget that soldierly virtues like courage, endurance, loyalty, readiness to sacrifice, are by no means the monopoly of men in uniform, they are the basic virtues of mankind. The daily life of ordinary people demands them constantly. Soldiers must necessarily extol and stress these common virtues because warfare is a coarsening job. In order to check its brutalizing influence a deliberate discipline based on moral principles is needed. The fighting man must not become a killer.

There have, of course, been times when Army Chiefs thought they could win their battles with brutes and that it was unnecessary and perhaps impossible to enforce a code of chivalrous discipline. But even they knew that there is a degree of demoralization which wrecks a fighting force. Anyway, modern Europe, with its citizen armies, needs the firmly established conviction that there is no clash between military duty and human morality. Militarism goes further than that. It gives all honour to the warrior, the public is impressed by his glitter and glory but the true secret of his attraction is the moral validity of the virtues which he practically claims to have monopolized. Courage and self-sacrifice are praised as if they were the prerogative of the soldier. He is therefore the embodiment of the highest ideals. Thus the depravity of war is screened

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off; militarism lures men into slaughter by appealing to their nobler instincts. That is the true and really appalling danger. A confusion of mind is brought about which intimidates and bewilders even those who detest war but who readily respond to the moral appeal of the soldierly virtues, particularly under pressure of some kind. Prussia has been a great master in exploiting moral appeal in order to tighten her grip on men.

Thirdly, militarism has the tendency of extending its sphere of influence and control further and further. Thus the proper value of things is distorted and falsified. A militaristic government often uses all its energy and ingenuity trying to improve the health of children, providing help and State services for mothers and babies and the motive behind it all is the care for the army; many soldiers are wanted. The common man by instinct dislikes and distrusts this kind of Governmental benevolence. Natural values are degraded, their proper meaning distorted. To live in times of peace under the shadow of total war, when the whole of life is so organized that it is ready for war almost immediately—such a society is a nightmare for most men. The militarist, however, considers it ideal.

The three main dangers of militarism are, however, not peculiarly Prussian. The third one, the perversion of values, the readiness to expand military influence, is hardly noticeable at all in eighteenth-century Prussia. On the contrary, the early Prussian tradition, in full agreement with the general outlook of the time, looked upon war as the king's affair and the army's job. Prussians thought the civilian population—*Gevatter Schneider und Handschuhmacher*—should be kept out of this noble game as far as possible. The idea of a nation's war, demanding the whole-hearted participation of every civilian, is quite un-Prussian; the French Revolution proclaimed it, Robespierre's friend, Saint Just, was its apostle. Prussians disliked the influx of new energies which the Jacobins welcomed and needed. After the Battle of Jena when Prussia collapsed, the commandant of Berlin issued his famous proclamation: 'His Majesty's troops have lost a battle. Calmness is the first duty of the citizen.' Reasonable words, but they sound slightly comic and out of place when we remember that the soldiers on the other side were singing the Marseillaise. Prussia shrank away from the military impetus which the revolutionary armies displayed. Such plebeian enthusiasm seemed to her improper. The embarrassed timidity of this attitude is symptomatic of the Prussian mind. Eighteenth-century Prussia is exclusive and provincial. Her political aspirations are limited; there is no imperialistic urge, no desire for far-reaching domination. The royal drill sergeant and bully who built up the Prussian Army had no political aspirations at all. The foreign policy of Frederick the Great was cynical in its methods but

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its objectives can hardly be called ambitious. To snatch away a rich province from one of his neighbours was not a laudable enterprise but it was also certainly not part of an imperialistic scheme. Whilst Frederick was fighting for Silesia, the Governments of England and France were fighting for vast colonial empires. Prussian foreign policy from 1713 to 1806 evolved no plan or scheme which could be compared with Richelieu's Great Design and its devastating results. No Prussian King ever launched attacks on such a scale as Louis XIV. I am not defending Prussia nor am I attacking France, I am comparing facts to illustrate my point that Prussia was provincial and politically unambitious or—if you like—unimaginative compared with other powers. It is therefore wrong to say that Prussia was from the beginning of her career a menace to the world; contemporaries never said that. Some people, like Winkelman, were disgusted by Prussia's militarism, others, like Goethe, were impressed by her military achievements, but Europe as a whole was not unduly alarmed. The Prussian menace is a more modern experience.

The disturbing influence of Prussia was first felt in Germany. Through her attack on Silesia and the events which followed, Prussia introduced the Austro-Prussian antagonism into German politics. There was from that time onwards a conflict of patriotic loyalties. The question was: Which of the two contending brothers is Germany's proper leader? The military glory of Frederick the Great and the strange fascination of his personality was felt everywhere and worked in favour of Prussia. Frederick's character had many repugnant traits but the man as a whole caught people's imagination. He seemed unique and he really was. Even the young Emperor of Austria came under his spell. Up to the present day Frederick the Great is the central figure of the Prussian legend. Whenever Prussia gets ready to set out on a new enterprise the memory of the great king comes to life again. There is always first a revival of the Prussian legend; one might almost call this a warning for her neighbours. Prussia, it must be understood, is sustained by her legend. After the Great War Werner Hegemann wrote a clever and venomous book called *Fridericus*. He was guided by the idea that a revival of Prussia would be impossible if the reputation of Frederick the Great could be destroyed. His idea was right in principle but his methods were fundamentally wrong. After all, it is senseless to deny that Frederick *was* a great man. He was not a man to be worshipped—there are no demi-gods—and it is surely a laudable enterprise to tear to pieces all panegyrics. The critics of Prussia, however, will always fail to achieve their purpose if they see nothing but callousness and pride. What, then, can be done to sterilize a legend of military glory? Will what the trumpeters of propaganda call the spirit of Frederick the Great ever die? It will not die sud-

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denly. The image of Fridericus Rex will presumably be carried into catacombs and hiding-places as the idol of an underground movement which will be getting ready to play the same game over again. But what will be the reaction of the bewildered people who remain in the open trying to piece together their normal life?

Stupor favours neither thought nor action. The forces of regeneration cannot be expected to work speedily. Furthermore, they will be represented by a small minority and it is certain that the unrepentant will claim for themselves, as a monopoly, the spirit of true patriotism. In Chapter I the importance of the German Churches has been stressed. Because of their fight and resistance they possess credentials such as no other group in Germany, neither a class nor a political party, can produce. Who else in Germany dared to ask Hitler such direct questions as the leaders of the Confessional Church when, in spring 1936, they sent a memorandum to the 'Führer'? This document dealt not only with matters of Church doctrine, it referred to concentration camps and the illegal proceedings of the Secret Police. It also criticized bluntly the deification of the 'Führer'. No wonder that the peevish demi-god declined to answer.

There remains, however, one anxious problem. The German Church, notably Protestantism, is bound with strong emotional ties to Prussia and its traditions. Unless these ties be broken, national regeneration will be impossible. More will have to be abandoned and rejected than Hitler and his creed. Take the case of Pastor Niemöller. He well deserves his world-wide fame. But his autobiographical sketch *From the submarine to the pulpit* (1938) makes uneasy reading. He takes pains to demonstrate that the change of profession was not really a new departure but rather the choice of a different route leading to the same goal. Germany's course up to 1918 seems to find his uncritical approval. Defeat and revolution are the two things that alone worry him. Of the 200 pages more than 150 are devoted to the narrative of war exploits. No wonder that Niemöller should have found it difficult to discern the true character of National Socialism. In his Easter sermon (1933) he welcomed the movement as a joyful sign of rejuvenation. How can we expect this kind of purblind Prussianized Christianity to bring about the change which is so desperately needed?

It is certainly a hard task to conquer the spirit of national self-righteousness, and should this spirit find refuge in the Church (and this will be attempted), one might well ask how and by whom Germany's national reformation can ever be accomplished. Analysis, however, cannot discover and estimate the hidden creative forces. Nor is the unimaginative and pathetic response which defeat and failure found inside

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Germany after the Great War sufficient evidence to warrant a pessimistic view on the nation's possibilities. But the German reactions in 1918 and during the period that followed should certainly make us ponder. There was self-pity but no self-examination; there was burning indignation about the injustice inflicted upon Germany by other nations but little readiness to see her own faults. Those who tried to were hunted down. Will all this be repeated? The answer must be: Yes, it will, and presumably with greater blindness and fiercer spite. But there are also men to-day who know the devil and resist him. Such men were not typical of the Kaiser's era. The story of these gallant defenders, I am sure, will come to light and might astonish the world. Regeneration is growth. It requires time, patience and, above all, as little unrest and disturbance as possible.

What is really needed, therefore, and might perhaps be supplied, is political repose. Life, significance and a certain amount of independence must be given back to the smaller units, to the family, to small ownership, and to local and provincial bodies and corporations. These were the impediments that the totalitarian flood has been trying to sweep away. The liberators of Europe will presumably discover that political apathy is widespread everywhere. This is not altogether a negative symptom. It expresses a longing, born of bitter experience, the longing for normal life. Most people outside the totalitarian countries believe that one ideology can only be fought and overcome by another one which is just as fierce and all-embracing but 'good'. The world is echoing to-day with the cries of those who want to rally their fellow men in order to inspire and train them for the 'mental fight' which, according to Blake, shall 'not cease'. There is reason to suspect that there will be little response in Germany to any kind of ideological campaign. Joseph C. Harsch wrote in his thoughtful book, *Pattern of Conquest*, 'Communism has been too closely allied with Nazism in Germany to be able to stand as an alternative if Nazism failed. If the one is discredited by events, the other will almost certainly disappear with it. The logical alternative to Nazism is not Communism but something else which will meet the rising German urge to something less strenuous and more normal.' This is true and applies not only to Communism but also to any other militant creed that might set out to convert and conquer Germany.

The restoration of normal life which Mr. Harsch anticipates is, however, a very difficult proposition and is not secured by the fact that many people want it. The general reluctance to accept another oppressive system does not make it impossible to impose such a régime. The scope of force is often underestimated by those who are accustomed to political arrangements which (thanks to the labour of centuries) have excluded

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acute violence from civic life. Germany no longer enjoys the benefit of protective institutions. There is no certainty that the deeper longings of the population will materialize; they might be disregarded. This grave possibility, however, does not make it futile to discover them.

There has been an overdose of strenuous beliefs and a reaction is bound to come. A sound realism that turns away from all idealistic aspirations and clings shrewdly and tenaciously to the simple duties and pleasures of this earthly life is not the worst attitude which men can adopt. It gives a certain protection against sophistry and the blasts of propaganda. There would certainly be less zeal and enthusiasm, less heroism but presumably also less misery because the great indefatigables who come along with a mission of some kind or the other would be regarded with intense suspicion. Such a philosophy of life need not be worked out and encouraged to-day; we can be certain that it exists already though it still lacks self-confidence and is not sufficiently sure of itself, too easily unsettled by the disapproval of pushful idealists. It must learn to value its own integrity and strength; for this outlook is full of promise if it can only be freed from the elements of bitterness and disillusionment. One might regard it as the sceptical and cautious wisdom of convalescence, an earthly philosophy no doubt, yet not without a noble ancestry. Montaigne is its most illustrious representative. His star will be rising, not only in Germany. In England, John Cowper Powys has developed a wayward, gentle, yet at the same time stoical and defiant philosophy along similar lines. He is, I think, the only modern philosopher whose name can be mentioned together with men like Epictetus. For Powys considers philosophy an urgent practical everyday affair and there is need for it. Dissatisfaction and disillusionment are widespread among modern men of all nations; many people are neither supported by religious beliefs nor by political hopes and they are disinclined to be stimulated by propaganda. They distrust words. Their only wish is to be left to themselves and to escape the grip of the meddlers.

Montaigne and his disciples come to their rescue. There is nothing final and conclusive about his philosophy, it is too humble to make such claims. Yet it opens the door to normal life and its simple sensations. There is a message of comfort in Cowper Powys's words: 'A man's life can be lived like a thing of magic still, if we will only be obstinate, crafty, and lonely.' The earth is less treacherous than man and an easier refuge than the hidden God. Man, through daily practice, can concentrate his attention, and perhaps his reverence, on a transhuman yet tangible world, which is a worthier object than the excitements and insanities of human affairs. If he perseveres, the never-changing becomes apparent and imparts to its devotee its calm serenity. How promising and healthy

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this attitude is, compared with religious archaism! The wisdom of convalescence, the profane piety has a significance which Christian believers should neither overlook nor disparage. It is a return to sanity, a healing force and as such it may well be called the fruit of *gratia sanans*. The friendly guidance which that philosophy provides is suitable for men whose idols have been shattered whilst the altars of their ancestral faith stand abandoned.

The re-education of the German youth in particular is a much discussed problem of to-day. The situation is certainly grave. A lurid fanaticism has been deeply implanted among the younger generation, boys and girls alike. But the problem of re-education is often approached from a wrong angle. There is no need to worry about future textbooks. The authorities of the Weimar Republic did not fail to bring out Republican textbooks. Little did it help. It is not in the sphere of organized education that this struggle is going to be fought. We can never succeed in making education an isolated province where values are instilled which are not accepted by the society around. Hitler has caught the German youth in his net as presumably nobody else has ever done before but he did not start his career as an educational reformer. He cannot be called a piper of Hamelin, he did not begin by ensnaring the children; first he won over men and women. Therefore we must conclude that the falling away from Hitler and all he stands for (including the Prussian legend) will have to set in among German adults. The foul business must be undone exactly where it started. There is something pathetic about the constant modern appeal to the immature. In times of crisis and decision we must not turn primarily to the young. Important affairs must first be settled amongst men. The modern preoccupation with youth is not always just a sign of social responsibility as it claims to be. It indicates also a lack of self-confidence among the older generation, an insufficient appreciation not only of the advantages but also of the peculiar duties which age and experience confer. Responsibility is shuffled off on to the young. The abdication of the old, the readiness to give way to any commotion that claims to represent youth, the eager desire to curry favour with the young and to speak in the name of the future—all this taken together is ominous.

We must now proceed with the survey of Prussia's career.

One would expect that the conflict of patriotic loyalties which Prussia had brought about, very much to the detriment of Germany, would have come to an end during Napoleonic times when Prussia and Austria fought side by side. There was certainly a chance to bury the senseless feud once and for all but the chance was missed (mainly, I think, through Metternich's fault) and Austro-Prussian antagonism became again with

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increasing intensity the main problem of German politics. This deplorable state of affairs gave Bismarck his starting point. He solved the 'German question' by excluding Austria from Germany and by uniting the rest of Germany under Prussian rule. This new state was the 'Reich'. A rather different kind of unified Germany would have emerged from the war of liberation in 1813, possibly also from the revolution in 1848 had success been granted to those who struggled for that aim. There was no divine necessity guiding the course of events and leading up to Prussia's triumph, as Prussian historians have maintained. Bismarck's policy in its initial stages up to Sadowa was based on his own personal decision. The very foundation of the Reich in 1871 can be fitly called his own work though the tide was then with him.

What was the character of the new state? What were its potentialities? The Reich was not just Prussia on a larger scale but rather an interfusion of Prussian elements with tendencies and forces of a very different order. Modern nationalism was one of them; others were industry, finance, and commerce. These forces were valuable allies, they backed up Prussia's success, increasing considerably her strength and drive but they were, all of them, antagonistic to the original traditions of Prussia. Prussian patriotism was mainly loyalty to the king. The French Revolution gave Nationalism a new dynamic fervour hitherto unknown. The country as such became a cause, or claimed to be one. When Voltaire wrote his *Candide*, he and his contemporaries believed that wars were the wicked pastime of greedy princes. The lesson was still to be learned that nations fight fiercer wars than kings. The wars of nationalism are not only fiercer, the war aims are no longer limited. Complete victory or utter defeat—that is the alternative which presents itself to fighting nations. It seems no longer possible to stick to limited war aims. Experience shows that they cannot even be formulated. The enemy becomes the foe incarnate, almost a fiend, just as it was in the wars of religion. Prussia distrusted the explosive power of this new nationalism but she yielded to it; she unfolded her sails and caught that mighty wind.

The new patriotism of the Reich was boisterous, self-assertive, and inflammable. It was, however, fundamentally nothing peculiarly German. We notice the same spirit of manufactured mass emotion in other countries. Tolstoy has given a masterly description of the Franco-Russian celebrations that took place all over France in October 1893 (*Christianity and Patriotism*). It was an outbreak of patriotic frenzy, utterly insincere and insane. On such occasions modern nationalism openly displays its sinister side, its hectic intensity and its vicious, puffed up tribal zeal. An emotional basis was provided on which the power of the state could firmly establish itself, ready to tighten its grip upon the

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citizen in a way which former generations would have thought impossible. The peculiar thing about the Reich was that its nationalism got interfused with the military traditions of Prussia. A small number of genuine Prussians—perhaps the Emperor Wilhelm I was among them—distrusted the Reich on principle. They feared for Prussia's integrity. If these men had been more articulate they would have maintained that the Reich had corrupted Prussia, not the other way round. There is some truth in this thesis. The Reich, up to a certain point, *was* Prussia, undoubtedly, but it was a deflected and vulgarized Prussia, supported by mass-acclamation and allied with commerce and the acquisitive spirit of the industrial age. This alliance certainly neither improved nor ennobled the military system set up by Friedrich Wilhelm I. The golden calf had never been worshipped in Prussia, this idol was rejected with contempt. Now the cult of Mammon was spreading rapidly. There were soon political consequences. The imperialism of the Reich under Wilhelm II was serving the interests of commerce, industry, and finance. Bismarck had declared that Germany was 'saturated', he feared collisions with the older powers and disappointed the pioneers of German colonial expansion, refusing the assistance which they clamoured for. In spite of Bismarck's cautious attitude, however, German imperialism grew and the driving force behind it was unmistakably mercantile.

Some of its spokesmen, e.g. Paul Rohrbach, tried to give an idealistic interpretation to this urge. He talked about the 'German idea in the world', an utterly empty phrase; what he really meant was steel and cotton. It is typical of the period that a well-meaning and able author should have thought it possible to transform commercial imperialism into something laudable by providing an idealistic cloak, however threadbare. Another, rather grotesque, example of this insincerity is the cartoon which Kaiser Wilhelm II drew (with the kind assistance of one Knackfuss) depicting the Christian nations, symbolized by archangels and the like, standing on a rock overlooking a wide plain. A shining cross hangs up in the air over their heads whilst in the distance dark clouds are gathering in the midst of which Buddha enthroned can be perceived. This drawing was called 'Nations of Europe, guard your most sacred possessions!' The Kaiser, at that time, was obsessed (only temporarily) by the idea of the 'Yellow Peril'. The 'most sacred possessions' (including, presumably, the Cross) had unfortunately become stage trappings—nothing more. They were used as such. Richard Wagner, though a genius, dished out freely the hotchpotch of ideas and sentiments which this hollow and theatrical age eagerly absorbed. His version of Christianity which roused Nietzsche's anger and contempt, deserves no other reactions—it is nauseating.

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Yet Wagner can be called a standard bearer of the 'Reich'; he fully represents that period. He provided a drug to which the materialists all over the world got addicted. It was the time when fathers strongly advised their sons to go into business, for money was regarded, perhaps even with regret, as the one true reality. Many of these people adhered to and even cherished some kind of idealism, aesthetic or otherwise; the educated bourgeoisie readily proclaimed Goethe as their Lord and Master. But all this appreciation was detached from life, at its best an ornament. Nobody even pretended that the actual world was affected by Goethe's cautious wisdom. The forces which moulded man's destiny and to which submissive service had to be rendered sprang from a different soil. Arndt has told in one of his autobiographical books how surprised he was to see Goethe stand to attention when some young lieutenants entered the room. A symbolical scene! A hundred years later, when the Nazis cracked their whips the disciples of Goethe were easily brought to heel.

In fairness to one of Germany's greatest sons it must be added that it seems doubtful whether Goethe had any true disciples at all. He was an enigma like Leonardo with whom he has much in common. As an old man he preferred to veil his convictions. It must not be believed, however, that his innermost secrets were some platitudes of free thought and sensualism as Heine and many others assumed. The great poet who was so profoundly struck by the 'labyrinthine ways of life' and the corresponding labyrinthine character of the human heart (*das Labyrinth der Brust*) cannot be regarded as the true representative of the Bourgeois Age and its inept self-confidence. He dwelt in a different zone. Goethe's wider influence was based on the misconceptions of his admirers. The men who chose him as their master, were prudent enough to come to an understanding with the more effective powers of this world. Spengler, who acclaimed Goethe as his forerunner, forcibly advocated this sort of realism in the introduction of his famous book *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*. Because of this bait his elder contemporaries swallowed with gusto his whole philosophy. He was not only a mystagogue but also in actual fact the trumpeter of big business and power politics. This came out even more unmistakably in his last book *Jahre der Entscheidung*.

The Prussian tradition based on Spartan simplicity was certainly a strange element in this expanding commercial mammonistic world. And again, the interfusion was accomplished. The peculiar flavour of the Reich did not escape the notice of thoughtful and sensitive contemporaries. Nietzsche's reactions deserve our full attention. He looked upon the Reich with suspicion, in his later years with hatred. Nietzsche realized that the unification of Germany, though it seemed to be the

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fulfilment of perfectly legitimate longings, was in actual fact the triumph of forces which were antagonistic to German tradition and civilization. Such verdicts, however, were not popular and were not taken seriously. The German 'Bildungsphilister' the educated bourgeois, welcomed the Reich frantically; they were beside themselves with joy and self-satisfaction. There had been victory after victory and further gains were still to come; no wonder that critical voices were not listened to.

Prussia went from success to success in the course of her history. There were two severe setbacks—1806 and 1918—but she rose again. Yet Prussia changed considerably during the process. She held fast to the essential element of her tradition, which is the competent training and preparation for war. If only sufficient scope is given to militarism Prussia is prepared to serve any master. Hitler's suburban mass movement would never have become a deadly menace had it not been for Prussia and her resources. National Socialist fanaticism, that mixture of self-deception, hatred, and brutality, is an exhausting emotion. It hardly gathers strength; it dissipates it. Therefore it is difficult to believe that the Hitlerites would have got beyond the stage of mob violence had they been forced to rely upon themselves alone. Prussian discipline, however, is a different matter, it provides calm and quiet strength. To have won Prussia over was therefore Hitler's most decisive victory. She became his obedient servant. Concentration camps and pogroms were tolerated by these highly trained war chiefs; they witnessed with silent disapproval the persecution of the Christian Churches, they even learned to swallow their indignation when the monarchists were ridiculed and snubbed by their new masters. Feeble defenders of the monarchy have they been themselves! Fifteen years before they had dispatched their last king to Holland when he seemed to be in the way. The truth is, Prussia floats on any tide since she has given up her provincial seclusion and abandoned the loyalty to her king. Torn away from its feudal traditions this militaristic system has become an instrument that might be seized by anybody who claims to be the master of Germany and is prepared to offer the bait which the generals are looking out for. The Prussians have been supping with the prospering bourgeoisie (under Bismarck and Wilhelm II); they appeared arm in arm with political gangsters (under Hitler). What will be their next *mésalliance*?

IV

AUSTRIA AND THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE

Military and political success must never be regarded as a test of validity. It is by no means impossible in human affairs that the better cause should be defeated. Such decisions, however, must not be regarded as absolutely irrevocable. It would be, of course, fantastic to take up nowadays the lost cause of Maria Theresa. Our sympathies may be on her side; more than that, we can hardly fail to realize that modern German history would have been different in aim and character had Frederick the Great lost the battle of Mollwitz (1741) as he nearly did. The young and inexperienced king had already left the battlefield and taken to flight when Field Marshal Schwerin managed to save the situation and won the day. The great contest which then started lasted for nearly 200 years. When Hitler entered Vienna with the Gestapo in his train, Imperial Austria reached the lowest level of defeat and humiliation. The ancient Empire was then submerged beneath the noisy waters of a Greater Germany. Yet the struggle between Austria and Prussia must be regarded as a closed chapter in history. It cannot be opened again by bolstering Austria up artificially, by making her the pivot of political restoration. Such attempts would only revive and strengthen the Prussian traditions which are still, as we know, a most potent force. Nevertheless, we must not allow Austria to be darkened by the smokescreen of her enemy's success. Her cause contains elements which are independent of any special historical setting, independent of political manifestations which belong to the past and cannot be restored. These elements are of importance and deserve careful consideration.

What, then, is Austria? Even the most hasty inquirer will agree that it is of no use to confine our investigations to the small state whose boundaries were defined by the Treaty of St. Germain in 1919. Post-war Austria can only be regarded as the remains of a mighty shipwreck. But even in her mutilated condition, Austria retained certain possibilities—she held a European key-position with regard to the Reich, and the gradually darkening aspect of its policy and aspirations. This key position, it is true, could not be maintained and defended without foreign help which, though intermittently and reluctantly offered, was finally withdrawn when the German threat became voluble and acute. One must go further back in history to grasp the true nature of Austria and

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her political functions. Austria has not only medieval roots, she is fundamentally a medieval conception. Since the fourteenth century Austria had borne the burden and responsibilities of the Holy Roman Empire; she is therefore built on imperial and not on national foundations. This had great implications; it created an atmosphere and affected the national temperament.

It is true, Austria represented the universal traditions of the Middle Ages at a time when these conceptions were rapidly fading away, challenged and assailed by an ever-growing opposition and overshadowed by new realities. The decline of the Holy Roman Empire had begun in the earlier Middle Ages, though it is difficult to point out when. The medieval system was fundamentally a complicated compromise, so much so that a close examination of facts at any given moment reveals a situation full of tension and frustration. The discrepancy between claim and reality was great. This need not surprise because the Middle Ages, more than any other period, were guided by transcendental ideas and were therefore prepared to regard any reality as a symbol and a sign. The actual function of a thing was blended with the idea of its deeper meaning and ultimate significance. The outlook of the Middle Ages and the conditions that were the result of it cannot be properly understood if this symbolism is not taken into account. The united Commonwealth of Christian nations was never a reality, far from it, but the idea existed and the Empire represented it, however precariously. In Goethe's *Faust*, part 1, the revelling company in Auerbach's cellar bellows forth a political song:

Das liebe heil' ge Röm'sche Reich
wie hält's nur noch zusammen?¹

An appropriate question! What was it that held the Empire together? The answer is, it was the shadow, rather the phantom of its mission that achieved this. Considering the decline of the central executive power, the almost continuous constitutional crisis, the triumphant ascendancy of antagonistic forces and principles, it seems surprising that the decline should have been so slow, the influence of the old conception, its power of attraction, so lasting.

Janssen maintains in his stupendous work on the Reformation that the Schism shattered a comparatively well-ordered world and ruined (amongst many other things) the prospects of the Holy Roman Empire. This is not true. The Empire had already been wrecked under the Hohenstaufen through the combined efforts of Emperor and Pope. It always suffered, even during its best periods, from the discrepancy

¹ The dear Holy Roman Empire! What on earth makes it still hold together?

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between claim and reality—it never was what it pretended to be. This weakness was but one aspect of the fundamental medieval failure surpassing the political sphere: the Christian transformation of the world was not achieved. The schismatic fervour of the inarticulate heresy which caused the religious disruption was the response to that state of affairs. The admission of fundamental failure is certainly not a denial of medieval achievements which were great and extraordinary; no student can fail to see that the Middle Ages were a climax in our history. But had there been no failure (of a more essential kind than ordinary Church abuses) there would have been no schism.

The Reformation started the landslide which was to bury the decrepit Empire, its idea and its last manifestations. After Europe had been divided into two religious camps, the Catholic emperor became a partisan. The House of Austria was, second to Spain, the champion of the Counter-Reformation which, at the end of the sixteenth century set out to reconquer the provinces that had been lost. Protestants identified this movement with the powers of darkness. Intolerance there was, most certainly, relentless, cruel persecution, and the threat of arms, but there was also a new devotion, a fervent mysticism, an almost sensual religious desire that must have been abhorrent to the disciples of Luther and Calvin. The gulf could not be bridged for the time being. The Emperor's ancient claim was, under these changed circumstances, not only nominal (it had been that before) it became almost spurious.

France exploited this situation. Richelieu's policy, vigorously continued under Louis XIV, was presumably guided by the idea that the imperial crown could be wrested from the Habsburgs, and the Bourbons be placed on the throne. This design, though it played about with glittering ancient titles, was essentially a project of national aggrandisement. The political minds bent on such plans were no longer moving within the orbit of the old Christian commonwealth; only a faint glimmer of this idea and its obligations may still have lit up their path. The foreign policy of seventeenth-century France was most certainly consistent, its aim was to destroy the Empire, to foster its decomposition by encouraging disloyalty among the German princes. No wonder, therefore, that Prussia's attack on the House of Austria in 1740 was favoured and supported by France, who immediately joined the aggressor. Frederick the Great wrote in his political testament (1752): 'Since the acquisition of Silesia our interest demands that we keep in alliance with France and all the enemies of the House of Austria. Silesia and Lorraine are two sisters, the elder one has married Prussia, the younger one France. This forces both powers to the same policy. Prussia cannot tolerate it that France should lose Alsace or Lorraine. . . .' And further on: 'Austria is our

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arch-enemy. We must ally ourselves with the enemies of our enemy, notably with France, Sweden, with some princes of the Empire, if possible with the King of Sardinia, even with the Turks.'

There was no lack of determination on the side of Frederick; all the means of a clever and calculating statecraft were used to damage Austria. This he achieved; first with the help of France, later on with the help of England. The policy of Graf Kaunitz, the Austrian Chancellor, aimed at the reconciliation of France and Austria—it failed, for the co-operation between the two great continental powers was precarious and unsuccessful. Prussia's advance was not checked. But what Kaunitz unintentionally achieved was an effective alliance between England and Prussia. Frederick contributed indirectly to the conquest of Canada, and Pitt helped to save and consolidate the Prussian state.

The Anglo-Prussian alliance was not only looked upon as an arrangement of political and military expediency; attempts were made to give it a deeper significance. Since the failure of the Counter-Reformation the Protestant powers of Europe were rising and there was the definite feeling that they had some common ground. The religious issue as such was certainly no longer a motive power in politics; its political possibilities had been exhausted during the wars of religion—only embers were left. The Protestant powers in the eighteenth and also in the nineteenth century were drawn to each other not so much by common religious beliefs (gradually fading away) as by a common atmosphere which can be defined as the residue of former convictions. Protestantism derived its sense of unity from the strong feeling (anxiously preserved) that whatever the common Protestant heritage may be, it was certainly and emphatically anti-Catholic. The pro-German sympathies in England grew mainly from this soil; it was Prussia (and later on the 'Reich') that got the benefit, not Austria, the Catholic power. Dynastic relations certainly played their part in drawing countries together; the wider issue, however, was of greater importance and influenced, if not directed, marriage policy.

When in 1757 Freiherr von Plötho, the Prussian chargé d'affaires in Ratisbon, kicked the emissary of the Imperial diet downstairs, it became obvious that imperial authority as such carried no longer much weight. Worse things were happening at that time, but this scene of discourtesy is revealing. The King of Prussia not only defied the Emperor, he also paid no regard to German interests. Such considerations he would have regarded as fantastic. Reading the appendix of his testament, headed: 'Political Reveries', one is struck by the petty avarice of these royal dreams. All he wants are some little conquests, here and there, to round off his territories. Another paragraph in this document reveals the king's

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strange and crudely simple heart. He informs his successors that Prussia ought to have enough provinces to yield an annual revenue surplus of five million talers. One campaign, he goes on, costs roughly five millions, and he comes to the happy conclusion that it would then be possible to finance wars out of revenue, 'without encountering money difficulties and without being a burden to anybody'. No more worry! The king's pastime is well provided for; nobody is really affected by war except the widows and orphans. The lack of vision indicated by such crafty calculations is indeed amazing.

The first period of Austro-Prussian antagonism came to an end with the Convention of Reichenbach in 1790, having lasted for half a century. There followed an interlude of peace and co-operation during the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. The co-operation was precarious, on the whole; both states remained rivals in the east whilst proceeding half-heartedly as brothers-in-arms in the west. The 'Polish Problem' was the stumbling block. There was, of course, no problem in the proper sense of the word. It was a case of housebreaking; Frederick took the part of Bill Sikes; Catherine was his confederate. Russia and Prussia had decided to prevent the Poles from putting their house in order because they wanted a Poland incapable of self-defence. They proceeded (in co-operation with Austria) to snatch away Polish provinces; in 1795 the whole of Poland was divided up amongst its greedy and unscrupulous neighbours. Neither Napoleon, nor the victorious alliance of 1813, brought Poland the relief she was entitled to hope for; suppression continued. The French Emperor and, a few years later, the Powers represented in Vienna were up against the same difficulty which they thought wise to take into account: Russia's views on the subject.

After 1815 the Austro-Prussian conflict flared up again and finally led to war. At that time Austria was no longer opposed by eighteenth-century Prussia and its fairly simple ambitions, the whole range of affairs had widened considerably. Prussia aimed at leadership and succeeded eventually in capturing German nationalism as a driving force behind its policy. It was, however, not only pressure from outside, the hostility of France and Prussia, that gradually wore Austria down and made the edifice of the Holy Roman Empire crumble. Austria herself yielded to principles which were antagonistic to her tradition, she gave way to the victorious spirit of the time. Joseph II is a good example. He admired Frederick the Great and his unscrupulous methods and the efficiency of Prussian administration. Joseph's plan was to remodel Austria along Prussian lines. A strictly centralized government, a powerful German bureaucracy, was going to be imposed on a country that was, by its very nature, a commonwealth of different nations and races. The result of

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Joseph's endeavours was, according to Hans Delbrück, that Austria was thrown into a state of chaos which might well have led to catastrophe, had it not been for the diplomatic skill of Joseph's successor. The dying emperor wrote to his brother Leopold: 'My good reputation and the political prestige of the monarchy—all has gone. Pity me, dear brother, and may God spare you a similar predicament.'

This cry of anguish should be remembered. Joseph was a well-meaning ruler, he wanted to 'modernize' the Empire. So much was he benumbed by the success of his Prussian enemy that he would have agreed with Professor Trevelyan who gives this biased view on the conflict of the Seven Years War: 'Frederick stood for the principle of a scientific, military autocracy, personally controlled by a self-sacrificing laborious king, his people's stern but careful tutor. Against him were arrayed, with the blessing of the Pompadour, the self-indulgent eaters of the people's bread who presided over the decadent governments of this *ancien régime* on the continent.' Efficiency, even of the superior scientific brand, should not unduly impress us. The ends are more important than the means. A greater and much more valuable inheritance had been entrusted to Joseph than to Prussia's 'stern but careful tutor'. He betrayed it. For the word 'betrayal' seems indeed the right term to use whenever Austria turns away from the supranational mission which is her *raison d'être*, and considers a burden what ought to be her pride. During the nineteenth century when Nationalism began to be regarded as the last word of political justice and wisdom, Austria found herself in a very difficult position. The apparent plausibility of nationalism shook the self-confidence of all those who could not claim to be among its promoters and trumpeters; they felt that the tide was against them. It certainly was. More than that; the conviction spread that the ideal of the independent national state was not only victorious but unquestionably right. This meant surrender. Austria was considered an anachronism, and believing this herself, she fell.

V

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The French Revolution is, next to the Reformation, the most important event in modern European history. It has not yet come to an end and its significance, as friend and foe quickly discerned, is universal. Metternich said: 'When France catches cold, Europe sneezes'. In spite of the vast amount of penetrating research work that has already been done, Louis Madelin holds that 'we are still only on the brink of the investigation'. This seems particularly true if we want to estimate the consequences of the Revolution, its impact on European history. Fifty or eighty years ago, most people would have felt no qualms about this problem: everything seemed to be perfectly clear and, on the whole, encouraging. The Revolution, so it was believed, had opened the era of freedom and progress and though there had been some turmoil and bloodshed, the beneficial results were considered undeniable and secure. Since then there have been setbacks which were certainly more than hitches; progress has been, to say the least, intermittent. Therefore doubts have begun to overcloud the rosy picture and it is in the light of experience (always in itself a trustworthy and welcome guide) that the French Revolution has to be re-examined.

By the end of the eighteenth century secularism had well established itself as a philosophy of life though it still preferred some kind of camouflage such as Deism and its vapid compromises. Secularism then proceeded to widen its scope and accepted readily the task of transforming the world—a task, we must remember, which religion had failed to master. Enlightenment set out to change the face of the earth. Political idealism hoping to inaugurate a new and better era, relied upon the tacit assumption that there would be a drastic change of heart, that men in future would feel and act more worthily than before if only some fetters were removed. Though there were no signs indicating that such a change was imminent, the hope was firmly entertained, nourished by Rousseau's false doctrine. The great emotionalist held that men were good and that their shortcomings were due to circumstances which could be altered. When this theory was put to the test, its futility became apparent—coercion had to fill the gaps which were torn into the idealistic schemes

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by the simple fact that men remained what they had always been. An imposing alliance between three different forces came into being through the events of the French Revolution and has never been broken up since: the alliance between irreligion, utopian hope and compulsion. The outcome of this combined Secularist venture has been so far not an earthly paradise but something very different—the modern State.

If we study the actual grievances, big and small, which have led to the outbreak of the revolution, we are puzzled by the complete lack of proportion between the evils that needed reform and the revolutionary action itself. We are reminded of the man who set his house on fire in order to roast potatoes in the glowing ashes. A great deal is known about the 'mismanagement' of the *ancien régime* in France and about the grievances of the population. The 'cahiers' can be called a piece of mass observation; we could hardly be better informed. It is also known that the necessary reforms were well afoot and that there seemed, humanly speaking, a good chance of putting things right without exposing state and society to violent shocks. Yet ten weeks (from May the 5th to July the 14th) were sufficient to throw the country into a horrid state of disorder and anarchy—law was suspended and crime (on the most hideous scale) had its way unchecked. This result had no connection whatsoever with the original grievances of the nation and the justified demands for reform. The conclusion must therefore be: a link is missing; the story makes no sense unless we discover it.

Lord Acton wrote: 'The appalling thing in the French Revolution is not the tumult but the design. Through all the fire and smoke we perceive the evidence of calculating organization. The managers remain studiously concealed and masked; but there is no doubt about their presence from the first.' These penetrating remarks point in the right direction. We can leave the National Assembly aside; events in Versailles were certainly important (notably the diplomatic victory of the Commons after the Séance Royale on June the 23rd) but they were not decisive. It was Paris, more strictly, the agitation proceeding from the Palais Royal that actually made the Revolution. No need to discuss in detail the involved problems of the Orleanist conspiracy. Even if the thesis is rejected (as it ought to be) that the renegade Duke was behind it all, deliberately plotting against the king and financing subversive propaganda, it cannot be denied that political agitation sufficiently backed to make purposeful work possible, entered the stage and decided the issue. Madelin has rightly rejected the term 'spontaneous anarchy' which Taine applied to the condition of France just after July the 14th. He remarked: 'The great anarchy was let loose under the action of two separate events, the capture of the Bastille, and the night of August the

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4th; it was an anarchy that was encouraged and occasionally even instigated.'

Political agitators working on their own or paid by others are familiar figures in history. Their effect has always been pretty well the same: they are the link between the genuine grievances and the revolutionary outburst. They exaggerate and distort the issue; very often they deflect attention so that the original starting point is practically forgotten. The unique effect of the French Revolution was this: the agitator became the central political figure, he was no longer a rover in times of unrest, he tried to establish himself in society as a permanency—a professional man, doing a useful job. The orbit of politics was made to revolve round a person capable of working up the minds of others.

Demagogic activity started in the gardens of the Palais Royal (we need only remember Camille Desmoulins and his frantic hysterical efforts on the eve of July the 14th) the headquarters were then shifted to the rue St. Honoré, the meeting place of the Jacobin Club, and to other similar societies. The new Art, of which the clubs were master, soon dominated the Constituent Assembly, and actually paralysed its work. Political oratory, the swaying of the crowd, can never claim to be, nor should one try to make it, the pivot of public affairs. It introduces an element of unrest and incompetence which turns the political workshop into an arena. Thus a turmoil is started which might unhinge society. It is surprising, indeed bewildering, to watch the rapidity with which political alarm spreads, once it is fostered by deliberate agitation. A fairly quiet community is then suddenly transformed, as if by magic, into a welter of disorder. Yet there is nothing mysterious about it, if we take into account not only the common lot of man (hard as it is) but also his restive and vulnerable nature. Almost unbelievable, however, are the absurdities (not to mention crimes) to which alarm and agitation lead. '*Proprement parler, l'homme est fou*' was Taine's verdict. If we study the slogans and the intellectual conceptions attached to them which have proved sufficient to stir the angry waters of a revolutionary crowd, we must come to the following conclusion: Were men to act in their own private affairs with similar confusion and blindness they would speedily upset and ruin their own existence and therefore (being timely warned) cease to proceed any further in that direction. In autumn 1789 when the king's right of veto was discussed in the assembly, a Parisian street orator was heard to shout: 'Do you know what veto means? Listen! You go home, and your wife has cooked your dinner. The king says "Veto"—no more dinner for you!' If it be said that it is unfair to quote such exceptional nonsense, the answer must be: It was exactly that kind of nonsense which brought about the march of the women to Versailles.

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Revolutions are military campaigns, improvised wars, pursuing ambiguous and shifting war aims. The fundamental problems of war (moral and otherwise) appear therefore in a different setting. There is, to begin with, the purely military question: how can the unarmed gain the upper hand? We can leave this problem aside though it attracts quite naturally the primary attention of all active revolutionaries. What are the aims of the improvised war? Who formulates them? Who thinks them out and weighs their importance and value? We are often told in the case of the French Revolution that all this had been done during a long period of preparation by philosophers and writers. This answer is not satisfactory. Philosophy had little bearing on the events of the revolution. But slogans had. They, however, are not only the caricature, they are the very reverse of philosophy and any kind of thought. Their deliberate effect is to blur issues. They represent vague and unlimited aims. The abolition of feudal privileges and the establishment of a constitutional monarchy would have been fairly well defined and limited objects. They had been achieved by the end of summer 1789. Yet the revolution went on and gained momentum, waged as a war of annihilation under the guidance of slogans. It is this combination of violence and vagueness of purpose that gives a revolution its destructive, uncontrollable vehemence and leads to the rule of sheer force. The excited citizen who joins a revolutionary movement is never aware of the fact that he is handing himself over, as a victim, to a system of coercion, in fact, a war machine.

There is, I think, no better and more careful analysis of the revolutionary mentality than Burke's. We must refer particularly to his *Letters on a Regicide Peace* (1796); it is, compared with his *Reflections on the French Revolution* a more mature exposition. The general validity of Burke's observations is striking. He goes into the very details of the French tumult but he is in actual fact talking about a much wider affair, he is discussing *the* Revolution. Only Thucydides might be called his equal. In many of his passages it would be possible to cross out the words 'Jacobin Republic' and replace them by 'National Socialist Germany'—Burke's statements apply most accurately to either case. It is not easy to give the gist of Burke's analysis. We shall concentrate on one point: the problem of dynamic force.

High praise is given in modern times to any state or society that displays dynamic qualities. If the alternative be frustration and inertia, such approval seems well justified, particularly in times of stress when great common efforts are demanded. A closer investigation leads to rather different conclusions. It is by no means certain that the dynamic vigour of the body politic is altogether a blessing. A price has to be paid for it, and it is good to know what the price is. Revolutionary France was cer-

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tainly a dynamic force. The Republic became even more dynamic, the deeper it plunged into crime. Burke set out to discover the source of this formidable energy, this 'new, pernicious, and desolating activity'. There is a strange connection between the corruption of society and the dynamic force which the State is able to display. The states of Europe, Burke maintains, have grown up slowly into complex systems which 'produced personal liberty . . . in a degree unknown to the ancient commonwealths. From hence the powers of all our modern states meet, in all their movements, with some obstruction. It is therefore no wonder that, when these states are to be considered as machines to operate for some one great end, this dissipated and balanced force is not easily concentrated, or made to bear with the whole force of the nation upon one point.' On the other hand: complete disregard of personal liberty, backed up by the pernicious doctrine that the individual as such does not matter, gets quickly rid of such encumbrances and turns the state into a smoothly running machine, capable of any 'total' effort that might be demanded. A similar policy of demolition secures the necessary material supplies. The rights of property are at least suspended; the state feels entitled to take what it needs. Burke writes: 'They have found the short cut to the productions of nature, while others, in pursuit of them, are obliged to wind through the labyrinth of a very intricate state of society. They seize upon the fruit of the labour; they seize upon the labourer himself.'

This ruthless simplification of society endows the state with dynamic power (political and economic) such as the Jacobin Republic had at its command. In order to establish and to maintain a government of that kind (Burke calls it 'the most effective government that has hitherto appeared on earth') a corresponding upheaval must take place, in fact precede it, in the moral sphere. The tremendous vitality which the Revolution gave to civic and patriotic emotions (at least for some time) is amazing. We need only listen to the Marseillaise to catch the flair of this new collective spirit and its militant ardour. The Revolution intensified the emotional vigour by removing all 'former correctives, whether of virtue or of weakness'. In other words: men were doped; certain passions were freed from all restraining motives and thus assumed a position not only of primacy but of monopoly—the consequences were bound to be devastating.

It is not always possible to discriminate clearly between wickedness and virtue misled, broken loose, and turned mad. Certainly the history of the French Revolution is full of odious crimes. There is little doubt that crimes were instigated to secure partisans who would, in their own interest, defend the revolution to the last ditch. This is an old revolution-

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ary trick. Thucydides, commenting on the revolution in Corcyra, wrote: 'Complicity in crime was a more effective sanction for loyalty to engagements than a solemn oath.' To mention a modern example: were not Hitler's S.S. men in exactly the same position? They were the last men who rallied round the Swastika, and they knew well why. The French Revolution produced similar types, cut-throats, and murderers (presumably less well groomed). But in fairness it must be said that many fundamentally decent men and women have taken part in or condoned evil deeds because they believed (misled by agitators) that some supreme interest was at stake. The moratorium of the decalogue (not to mention the Sermon on the Mount) had been declared in favour of some glaring ideal, the defence of which was believed to justify all means. The blood-stained, Republican virtue, in its silly pseudo-Roman make-up, was not altogether a pose; it was unfortunately something worse than that; it indicated a state of profound moral disorder.

The conflict between the Revolution and the Church was therefore inevitable. Even if the Constituent Assembly had not made the blunder of the 'Civil Constitution' (mainly through ignorance), the crisis was bound to come, unless the Church herself had been swallowed up by the moral disorder that was ravaging France. Whenever a moral moratorium is proclaimed, no matter what the pretences and catchwords might be, the Church is challenged. There is no compromise possible on that issue. The student of history must add that compromise has never been seriously attempted, though there have always been some Christian Quislings in the hour of danger, men who discovered that the Revolution and the Christian faith were, after all, pretty well the same thing, and should therefore join forces. Christ has been called *le bon sansculotte* and in our days some parsons have told us that the Son of Man is really a standard bearer of the red flag. The betrayal of religion is not always due to sheer opportunism; people believe that a struggling and dwindling faith may gain new vigour by riding resolutely on the tide of the time. The proposed alliance between Christianity and Revolution has never come off so far—conflict and persecution came instead.

What was the impact of these momentous changes on European history? For some time Europe was sitting on the fence, watching the growing turmoil. The challenge was not immediately realized as such. The first idea that seems to have sprung up in the minds of politicians was the sly calculation that France would weaken herself and become rather negligible as an opponent. William Eden, British Ambassador at the Hague, wrote in September 1789 to the Duke of Leeds: 'It is certainly possible that from this chaos some creation may result; but I am satisfied that it must be long before France returns to any

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state of existence which can make her a subject of uneasiness to other nations.'

Lord Dorset, the Ambassador to France, took a different view. He rather astonished his Prussian colleague, von der Goltz, by being 'as distressed by all that has happened as if the blow had fallen on the King, his master. In truth, it must go to his heart, but would it not be well if he distinguished better between his personal affections and the interests of his post?' Prussia's policy went further than silent approval of the disorders in France, she actually co-operated with the revolutionaries, distributing bribes (through a special emissary of the King, a Jew called Ephraim) and inflaming the hatred against Austria and the unfortunate Queen.

There were, roughly speaking, three stages through which the relations between the Revolution and Europe have passed: appeasement, combat, and assimilation. These stages did not follow each other in a clear chronological order, they overlapped. The military struggle against revolutionary France, and, later on, against her greatest son, lasted from 1792 to 1815, almost without interruption. But the combat did not cease after Waterloo. What is usually called contemptuously the period of reaction is fundamentally a policy of defence against the Revolution and though there is much to be criticized, it is certainly wrong to condemn the whole enterprise as the outcome of fear and stupidity. We shall consider this period in the following chapter.

Appeasement was at work right through the stage of combat, though it grew less as time went on. It was most pronounced in the vacillating policy of Prussia, who turned out to be a most ineffective and unreliable ally. The battle of Valmy and the retreat of the Duke of Brunswick in 1792 will presumably always remain a mystery. Prussia was more interested in the partition of Poland than in any success against France, and in 1795 she concluded a separate treaty. The Prussian negotiators who came to Paris (the actual treaty was signed at Basle) posed as friends of the Revolution and clapped frantically when they heard the revolutionary songs. Strange defenders of the common cause! The Austrian minister Thugut believed that there had always been a secret understanding between Berlin and the Jacobin government. The honour of having persistently defended Europe falls to Austria and England, though Prussia's share in the final struggle (from 1813 onwards) must be called almost decisive. It was not for the first time that co-operation between England and Austria had led to beneficial results.

The gradual and partial assimilation of the French Revolution by its opponents began during the period of military conflict, slowed down during the period of reaction, and gained new vigour about the middle

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of the nineteenth century, after Metternich's system had broken down. The war against the Republic forced innovations upon the Allies; they had to copy their enemy if they wanted to withstand his formidable thrust. The old liberal legend that enthusiastic volunteers defeated the uninspired armies of the kings is no longer accepted to-day. The military superiority of France was resting on different foundations. The disasters of 1792 when the cry: '*Sauve qui peut!*' arose and the soldiers murdered their officers, had taught the rulers of France a lesson: enthusiasm alone was not enough to keep a war machine going; iron compulsion was needed. A new conception of war (corresponding to the new conception of the state) made it possible to use coercion on a vast and ever-increasing scale. The orators proclaimed the new idea; the soldiers, notably Carnot, put it into practice. This is the plan of National Defence which Barère outlined in the Assembly: 'From this moment until that in which every enemy shall have been driven out of the territories of the republic, every Frenchman is permanently under requisition for service with the armies. The young men will go out and fight; the married men will manufacture weapons, and transport stores; the women will make tents and clothing and nurse in the hospitals; the children will scrape lint from old linen; the aged will betake themselves to the public squares there to raise the courage of the warriors, and preach hatred against kings.'

Here it rises for the first time, the spectre of total war! These propositions are not identical with the spontaneous efforts that were made in beleaguered cities, old and new. War is organized on a new footing, it is intensified by a new dynamic force which is pushing on far beyond the narrow limits of defence. Total war can never be carried out on a voluntary basis, and a healthy society is therefore not ready for it. To accept efficiency in that grim enterprise as a token of sound social structure is a profound error. When in 1793 the Committee of Public Safety began to revolutionize the war, the country was weary and apathetic. It had to be driven into this enterprise at the sword's point. The formidable weapon which in times to come made Europe tremble, was forged against the will of the French nation under the pressure of a Terrorist government. Such is the historical origin of total war.

The new conception of war had many implications. I refer to what has been said in Chapter III about limited and unlimited war aims. Nobody strikes at a fly with a club. We remember the reveries of Frederick the Great, who counted his talers hoping to be able one day to finance his campaigns out of revenue. He fought for provinces and limited objectives, and when opposition was too strong he recoiled and came to a compromise. Louis XIV had done the same, though on a larger scale.

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All the wars of the eighteenth century were fought in that spirit. Total war aims at total victory; a compromise seems no longer possible, the pressure of the forces involved is too great. Efforts and sacrifices have to be on such a scale that the nations expect corresponding rewards—nothing less than a transformed world. Plans and promises assume an utopian character. Expectations are roused which could only be fulfilled if human nature ceased to be what it has been so far. Disappointment must be the outcome, often aggravated by the bitter feeling that there has been a breach of faith. But the utopian schemes seem to be unavoidable. The purely defensive idea is incapable of providing the necessary incentive particularly in societies composed largely of proletarian and semi-proletarian classes. The disinherited cannot be expected to defend vigorously arrangements which have not been working in their favour. Total war turns out to be a revolutionary undertaking whether the combatants (or their leaders) like it or not.

There is another implication: it becomes more difficult to keep the spirit of peace alive whilst the contest is raging. Obviously the spirit of peace and concord is forced to recede when war breaks out, and there are people who believe that it should disappear altogether and find no refuge. But the stability of the arrangements at the end of a war depends entirely on the genuine readiness for reconciliation that has managed to keep alive amidst strife and hatred. From what other source should peace proceed? Hence the practical importance of all those marginal wartime activities to which the code of chivalry invites. The humane treatment of prisoners, the protection of non-combatants, the nursing of the wounded, friend and foe alike, all such duties and obligations are important because they anticipate the normal state of affairs which is peace. Their marginal character does not affect their urgency. It was, however, easier to uphold the noble code of chivalry in the centuries of the kings than in the epoch of fighting nations. Total war eats away the narrow margin which the chivalrous virtues are trying to defend. The nature of modern combat increases the psychological difficulties. Men taking part in total destruction are suddenly called upon to behave like Knights of the Round Table. No wonder that some are found wanting. Yet praise and honour are due to those who do not fail. To some the question presents itself whether the minor readjustments of chivalry really meet the case. Even those who have definitely made up their minds will often be forced to reconsider the moral problem of war under the pressure of actual experience. War is revealing to-day—more than ever before—its gorgon's face. The women and children of Troy were safe so long as there was a Hector guarding the city. No such gallant defender can protect women and children to-day against the most terrible onslaught.

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'The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.' Warring nations are always under the cloud of this commanding word.

All that has been said about war applies also to revolutions. They are, as has been stated before, improvised wars of a particularly lawless kind. The hatred which they inflame (interfused with moral indignation) consumes like a fire the remnants of peaceful disposition and decency. The spirit of vindictiveness urging on to crime rules triumphantly.

Dynamic war and its competent organization was the first gift which the French Revolution forced upon Europe. It was not accepted everywhere with the same readiness and no nation accepted it fully. It would have been impossible to do so without drastic changes in state and society, and if these really had been attempted a most curious and pathetic situation would have arisen: in fighting the Revolution, Europe would have accepted it. This did not happen. No state went further than Prussia in adapting itself to the new conditions. This readiness was brought about mainly through Prussia's defeat in 1806. The Prussian reformers, however, were no Jacobins. They proceeded cautiously. Conscription was introduced in the face of much opposition from military circles. This, certainly, was a turning point. More important, however, than the actual laws of reform was the new spirit that animated them.

In discussing this spirit and its significance we are on very controversial ground. I consider Freiherr vom Stein a great conservative statesman whose work should have been taken up and completed by Austria. Germany's unification under Austria's leadership was within reach after Napoleon had been defeated. Certainly Stein himself thought this possible. Such a solution would have brought under Austria's sway the spirit of nationalism which Stein and his friends had fostered and welcomed as a necessary preparation for the war against the French invader. Examining this propaganda we are reminded (as so often in similar cases) of the bags of Aiolos, which are not opened without great danger. Ernst Moritz Arndt, Stein's principal spokesman, was fundamentally a conservative politician. He was a peasant's son and always retained the peasant's outlook. It is true, he preached a fierce and barbarous hatred against the French. But, to do full justice to this man and his political aims, one must take into account his humble and gentle character, which is so clearly revealed in his autobiography. Arndt worked for the restoration of Germany, he was not attracted by any reversal of traditional standards and values. He was a man of Virgilian piety.

Fichte is a very different case. His mind, most certainly, was highly superior to Arndt's, his ideas were new and challenging. In the winter of 1804-5 he lectured in Berlin on 'The characteristics of the Present Age'.

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His thesis was that 'a State which constantly seeks to increase its internal strength, is forced to desire the gradual abolition of all privileges and the establishment of equal rights for all men, in order that it, the State itself, may enter upon its true right, viz., to apply the whole surplus power of all its citizens, without exception, to the furtherance of its own purposes'. Any true revolutionist hearing this, might indeed tremble, for fear the professor is going to give the whole secret away. Leviathan is almost unmasked. Fichte regarded as a perfect ideal what Burke considered a stage of corruption. Whether we agree with the one or with the other, we have to admit that Fichte describes lucidly the revolutionary state, the abolition of all independence, the equalitarian frenzy which exposes the citizen to the full undiminished power of the state. In 1808 Fichte delivered his famous 'Reden an die Deutsche Nation'. The Prussian state had collapsed, a French garrison was in Berlin, Fichte faced bravely great personal danger. The lectures attempt to create a new spirit of nationalism. The German people are implored to live up to the new ideal thus setting an example for other nations. Is there any authority, Fichte asks, that 'can have an unquestionable right to demand of everyone it meets, whether he himself consents or not, and if necessary to compel him, to put everything, life included, to hazard?' And his answer is: nothing, 'but the consuming flame of higher patriotism which conceives the nation as the embodiment of the Eternal; to which the high-minded man devotes himself with joy, and the low-minded man must be made to devote himself.' Note the insidious though perfectly logical combination of mystical nationalism and compulsion! The 'consuming flames of higher patriotism' which Fichte was trying to kindle have devoured since then the happiness of millions and devastated the ancient commonwealth of nations. To call these ideas Prussian is misleading, nor were they German (they were indeed opposed to all German traditions); they were revolutionary.

Fichte's expostulations are akin to the harangues of the French orators, Brissot, Isnard, and the rest. The philosopher ended his addresses with these words: 'Do we know of another nation that would justify the same expectations? I think everybody who does not indulge in wishful thinking but investigates this problem with care and thought must answer in the negative. There is no way out: if you (the Germans) founder, mankind will founder as well and there will be no hope for any future recovery.' With all due respect to Fichte's greatness, it must be said bluntly: such pernicious nonsense makes the head spin. Fichte's *Reden* have been treated with utmost reverence, not only by Germans. Seely called them 'the prophetic and canonical book which announces and explains a great transition in modern Europe'. Indeed, it does, but

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let us hope that a time will come when this book is laid aside as an aberration, as a pseudo-mystical tract.

We must not overestimate Fichte's actual influence; the old order of state and society was still strong. Neither his political nor his educational ideas had any immediate decisive effect; they were not yet applicable. Nevertheless, Fichte is of paramount importance because he illustrates forcibly the influx of the Revolution into Germany and the dynamic perversion of patriotism based on revolutionary conceptions. Total war (the Jacobin bequest) was supplemented by a manufactured excitement about the nation and its unsurpassed grandeur.

Poets were soon beginning to pay tribute to this new, unpleasant spirit. It is astonishing (and revealing) that Heinrich v. Kleist, the herald of patriotic ferocity, should have been a contemporary of Matthias Claudius who has written verses of Franciscan purity and calm. Kleist was his antagonist; he might have come from another planet; he certainly lived in a different world. In his drama *Die Hermannsschlacht* and in his poems and prose, he advocated a barbarous and immoral patriotic fanaticism.

Alle Triften, alle Stätten
Färbt mit ihren Knochen weiss;
Welchen Rab'und Fuchs verschmähten,
Gebet ihn den Fischen preis!

Schlagt ihn tot! Das Weltgericht
Fragt euch nach den Gründen nicht!¹

Well do we know that spirit! The wolfish poet is wrong. It is to be expected that on Doomsday inquiries will be made into our motives. Perhaps Kleist wanted to say that the butchering patriot represents 'Judgement Day'. In that case, no comment is necessary. In order to restore our belief in the sanity of poetical inspiration, may two verses of Claudius' *Abendlied* follow here. They are something more than merely beautiful; they are good (in the simple and exalted sense of the word).

Wie ist die Welt so stille
Und in der Dämmerung Hülle
So traulich und so hold,
Als eine stille Kammer,
Wo ihr des Tages Jammer
Verschlafen und vergessen sollt.

¹ Whiten all meadows and fields with their bones; throw to the fish those whom the ravens and foxes have left. Kill him! Judgement Day asks for no reasons!

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So legt euch denn, ihr Brüder,
In Gottes Namen nieder!
Kalt ist der Abendhauch.
Verschon uns, Gott, mit Strafen
Und lass uns ruhig schlafen
Und unsern kranken Nachbar auch!¹

There is no need to follow step by step the advance of dynamic nationalism. The old supranational foundations of Europe were discarded and definitely abandoned; the continent attempted to settle down (most confidently) in a state of atomization—each nation considering itself a self-sufficient unit. Perhaps men are ready to-day, after bitter experience, to appreciate the wisdom of Lord Acton's words: 'The theory of nationality is a retrograde step in history. It is the most advanced form of the Revolution and must retain its power to the end of the revolutionary period, of which it announces the approach.'

¹ How calm the world is, and how homely and good behind the veil of dusk, like a quiet room where you forget all the sorrows of the day in sleep.

Lie down in the name of God, brothers. The evening breeze is cold. May God spare us and give us and our sick neighbour a quiet night.

VI

THE PERIOD OF 'REACTION'

Continental history in the nineteenth century can be roughly divided into two periods. The first is a period of retardation, commonly called reaction. It came to an end in 1848, actually before that, but the definite date is convenient. The second period is marked by the ascendancy and consolidation of new political and social forces: the modern national states (exorbitantly armed) and the industrial system. In the twentieth century a severe crisis overtook these seemingly well-established forces, affecting their very foundations and calling back to life conflicts and problems that seemed almost forgotten. Europe has entered again a revolutionary phase of great intensity. Thoughtful people are beginning to wonder whether there will be dykes strong enough to break the furious tide. This present predicament enables us to study with greater sympathy and concern the efforts of our ancestors who tried to restore normal life after revolution and war had been raging for over twenty years.

The central political figure of reactionary Europe was the Austrian Chancellor, Prince Metternich.¹ The history of the nineteenth century has been mostly written from a liberal point of view. No wonder, therefore, that Metternich's case (and his case is a strong one!) has been inadequately represented and that the great German statesman was glibly labelled as the champion of a stupid and bigoted policy of reaction. The facts, however, tell a very different story. Metternich is the rare example of a statesman who has been able to lead his nation, and its allies as well, in war and peace. This alone gives him distinction. The diplomatic technique which he applied in his fight against Napoleon deserves to be incorporated into a manual of political strategy. Fully aware of the fact that there could be no real deal with Napoleon, he nevertheless advocated limited war aims, supported by England yet fiercely opposed by his Prussian and Russian allies, who were eagerly aiming at total victory. Metternich wanted to reduce the Corsican conqueror to the status of a defeated 'King of France'. There was little hope of achieving this, but it would have been the decisive victory not only over Napoleon but also over his legend and the forces which had carried

¹ The reader is referred to Mr. Algernon Cecil's stimulating study.

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him to power. Therefore it was well worth trying. But the negotiations at Chatillon broke down. Total victory came, Waterloo and the rest of it. The future development of France was burdened with the dramatic legend of the great Emperor overpowered by his enemies and making his exit like a hero.

The Vienna settlement put an end to the long struggle which Europe had fought against France. Favourably indeed does the work of the Congress, based on Metternich's political views, compare with the arrangements of the peacemakers in 1919, when the theory of nationality was put to the test. The generous treatment of France on which Metternich, supported by Wellington and Castlereagh, insisted, was, after all, common sense, if peace were the aim and not vengeance. Yet it was hard work to make common sense prevail and to check vindictiveness and other appetites that were rampant among the allies. The Treaty of Vienna gave Europe the longest period of peace in modern times—and that is something to be grateful for.

Metternich's general reputation is, however, less connected with these great achievements than with the principal character of his policy after 1815. He was the arch-enemy of the Revolution, believing it to be a malady of the body politic, that might befall any nation and turn out fatal if no cure were attempted. He regarded France, even after the restoration, as the potential fountainhead of further revolutionary developments, and there he was right: but, like Burke, he would never have considered the revolution a typical French product. The revolutionary danger was, to his mind, a universal problem. Hence his policy of active European co-operation (involving the principle of intervention) hence his method of bringing the great powers again and again to the conference table.

The problem arises: was Metternich's diagnosis right? I think it was. But when it comes to deciding whether his political tactics and methods were adequate and successful, many objections must be raised. He certainly failed in the end. Was it his fault? There is ample evidence to prove that Metternich, unlike most politicians, realized clearly the limitations of politics. He was free from the illusion that a new and better world can ever be conjured out of the anarchy of war as if it were its logical and proper consummation. He knew that his political arrangements were only temporary, he did not try to put up a permanent building. But Metternich discredited his policy of defence by carrying the principle of legitimism too far. His policy often assumed an odious nature. This must be emphasized. The propped-up Kings in Spain and Naples, vicious, vindictive, and priest-ridden tyrants were kept in power through armed force which Metternich directed. The methods of government which

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the Austrian Chancellor protected in these countries were just as bad and obnoxious as the practices of the French Revolution at its worst.

The crucial problem was Germany. The German confederation was a poor substitute for what people had really expected—the restoration of the ancient empire. Disappointment was widespread. The great modern historian, Hans Delbrück, defends the confederation (unsatisfactory though it was) and maintains that it was impossible to achieve more at that time. There were contemporaries who held similar views. In 1816 the historian Heeren published a pamphlet in which he said that a strong united Germany might easily turn aggressive and become a general menace. This is quite true, as we know. Bismarck's Reich was by its very nature an agglomeration of expansive forces difficult to control. Had Austria restored the Empire in 1815, there is good reason to believe that this state would have been 'saturated'. German nationalism (already growing wild) might have found fulfilment and also corrective restraint within the framework of older traditions. Austria, let us hope, would have imparted her lack of zeal (which befits a civilized nation) to the greater, more turbulent unit. The great chance was missed. Delbrück is certainly right when he emphasizes the diplomatic difficulties that prevented the restoration of the empire. Only a very bold policy could have swept these obstacles aside. Boldness was needed, for popular support had to be mustered. More than that: public opinion could not have been a useful ally in this struggle without a representative system. And here we touch the root of the trouble. Warned by the sordid history of the National Assembly in France, the governments of Europe were scared by the idea of summoning a parliament. That road, they thought, leads to the guillotine. It was forgotten, that the furies of the Revolution had emerged from Paris, not from Versailles. The Assembly itself had been comparatively harmless. Thus the problem of the empire and the constitutional question were closely linked together; they were in fact *one* problem. This problem was left unsolved because of fear.

The present generation, less attracted by the charms and graces of the Mammoth State, will perhaps appreciate the good points of the German confederation more readily than the contemporaries. Had it not been for the disturbing influence of Austro-Prussian animosity combined with the growing momentum of democratic nationalism, there is no reason why this political arrangement should not have worked. Let us assume for one moment that the rivalry between the two states had been overcome by the common struggle against Napoleon. This would have given the German 'Bund' the chance of developing into a real federation, and as such it would have gained presumably more stability, though less

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power, than the Bismarck Reich. It could never have become the receptacle for modern nationalism, no more than Switzerland; the native regional traditions, so strongly emphasized and fostered, would have prevented the influx of that fabricated and homeless spirit.

Quite apart from its unfulfilled promises, there is one point that can be raised in favour of the 'Bund'. The German Confederation was more German than the Reich. The war of 1866 was fought by Bismarck to destroy the Confederation and he succeeded. That year was more than a turning-point, it was a breach with the past, almost a new departure, such as rarely occur in the history of a nation. Prussia's leadership, coinciding with rapid industrialization, brought about such drastic changes that the continuity of national life was ill preserved; too much went overboard in order to facilitate further advance towards wealth and power. A typical German of the Reich bears little resemblance to his ancestor who lived a hundred years ago; the past seems to have been blotted out. Gentleness of character and maturity of mind have been replaced by efficiency and crude ambitions. A book like Kügelgen's memoirs, a literary masterpiece combining tenderness with strength, illustrates this point well: there we find the accurate description of a typically German world, the essentials of which the Reich has not been able (and unwilling) to absorb. Spectacular success has been undoubtedly on the side of the Reich, at least in the beginning, but a development that led with uncanny precision, certainly in a straight line, from Bismarck to Hitler, deserves the suspicion of Germans who love their country. One point must be strongly emphasized: the ridicule that has been poured upon the German 'Kleinstaaterei' (small principalities) is sheer propaganda. Human life was neither cramped nor unworthy in those small, independent States. It was the 'Grosstaaterei' that brought misery and also reduced, quite unmistakably, the stature of man. The greatness of a nation does not express itself in statistical figures. Many people to-day would be prepared to admit this and pay lip service to the principle involved but when their real convictions are put to the test they go in for vastness.

The policy of defence ended in failure. But in order to appreciate the wisdom of Metternich's outlook, let us turn away from politics and look upon life in its fullness. What did the great statesman want to defend? The answer can be given in one word: tranquillity. This precious gift comes never from outside; it is a state of mind. Christian civilization knows and guards the secret of tranquillity. Other civilizations, of course, have achieved the same. How could a claim of monopoly be made by Christians in face of books like the *Táo Teh King*, or the Buddhist *Dhammapada*? The Church, it is true, has inherited or rather appro-

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priated the excessive spiritual claims of Israel, the chosen people, but it is hard to discover the benefits which such an attitude bestows. Instead of insisting upon a superiority which is not borne out by facts, we should confine ourselves to humbler statements and stress the point that Europe is not devoid of the contemplative spirit. The coloured races would presumably consider even this cautious remark untrue; for Europe, as a conqueror, has shown a terrible and merciless face to the outside world, making it believe that our most valued treasures are machines and terrible weapons. It is therefore of particular interest to study the period of Reaction which put tranquillity above progress.

Such is the power and the attraction of this spiritual gift that its reality can be grasped even by a man who would not claim to possess it and therefore lacks intimate experience. I refer the reader to Walter Pater's masterly essay 'Diaphanéité'. Pater was not a Christian, but he was at home in our civilization and knew its ancient source of inspiration. *Marius the Epicurean* is ample proof of that. In his essay he talks in very general terms without referring to any specific historical situation, though he mentions once Thomas à Kempis. Yet it is perfectly clear, I think, that the type which he describes is the Christian saint, or rather, it is one aspect of sanctity which he has in mind. Pater writes: 'He crosses rather than follows the main current of the world's life . . . *sibi unitus et simplicatus esse*, that is the long struggle of the *Imitatio Christi*. The spirit which it forms is the very opposite of that which regards life as a game of skill and values things and persons as marks or counters of something to be gained, or achieved, beyond them. It seeks to value everything at its eternal worth, not adding to it, or taking from it, the amount of influence it may have for or against its own special scheme of life.' He ends with the words: 'A majority of such (men) would be the regeneration of the world.'

The short quotation does not do justice to Pater's essay which must be read in full. On one point we may venture to disagree. 'The character we mean to indicate,' Pater writes, 'achieves this perfect life by a happy gift of nature.' The theologian would retort that it is a gift of grace and that man's mind must get ready to receive it. So much is the diaphanous character, which Pater describes, the result of endeavour and preparation that we can even point out the manual of spiritual training that has been used throughout the centuries for such a purpose. It is the Psalter. A seemingly paradoxical attitude finds expression in the psalms: the powers of this world, enemies, princes, and other calamities are realized as such in their undiminished crushing vigour. Yet at the same time they are nonentities, utterly vain and futile, almost ridiculous. They cannot prevail. *Vox exsultationis et salutis in tabernaculis justorum*.

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Tranquillity, not necessarily nourished by religious beliefs, is always saturated with personal experience. There is a contribution to human life which only mature minds can make. Ideas can be grasped by anybody but wisdom based on sensations and their proper enjoyment is the result of experience. It is Sense, written with a capital letter—certainly not a thing that could be taught by clever people and be mopped up by the keen. Sense, which can also be called Man's true and proper adaptation to life (and is there any higher aspiration?) is the hallmark of all civilizations. Resistance is offered to the follies of the day and to the ambitious schemes of the wicked and turbulent.

The secret of tranquillity gives man great strength but it hardly works for progress in the common sense of the word. A society animated by this spirit tends to be static, it will certainly change (for change it must) but it meets innovations with caution even with reluctance. Metternich's Austria was not a society of this pronounced type. Yet it was still fundamentally static. The truly conservative character cannot be denied. Delbrück, talking about the general conditions in Germany during the period of reaction, makes this important admission: 'The masses were indifferent (to the revolution); obedient to their ancient governments and content with having fought successfully the bitter struggle against the foreign conqueror.' The German autobiographies of the early nineteenth century, revealing a calm and tranquil mode of life, confirm Delbrück's verdict. These remarkable books give full information about the family life in Germany, its strong protective influence, and the rich texture of its homely traditions. The father's house, the native valley, are the precious memories on which genuine patriotism is founded. The supranational outlook of the Middle Ages did not endanger this ancient and noble feeling, on the contrary, it kept patriotism sound.

A society that pours scorn on people who love their country dooms itself. The Weimar Republic, for instance, was undermined by the nasty anti-patriotic output of many intellectuals who, in their blindness, thought they were serving the cause of freedom. The negative spirit expressed itself also in more civilized forms. Emil Ludwig attempted to interpret the national, even the Christian, heritage though he was not qualified to do so. Some schoolmasters, poor things, solemnly proclaimed 'the death of the classical German literature' (*Klassikertod*), full of pride that they should have been able to discover so prodigious an event. Those who were ready at that time to break away from Prussian traditions found no better guides than these noisy and incompetent modernists. The period of reaction of the time of Metternich, and its literature and art, fostered with sympathy the quiet and gentle spirit of loyalty to the fatherland, the nation's homestead. This is how it should

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be. Do the guttersnipes of modern German nationalism really believe that it would be up to them to teach the generation of Stifter and Jakob Grimm what patriotism means? Or do they venture to say that those great men would accept the unsavoury dishes which the propaganda cooks prepare? Modern propaganda can only create false emotions. Its crafty schemes of throwing out baits which people have to swallow remind us of Smerdyakov's nasty trick in *The Brothers Karamazov*: 'He told the boy to take a piece of bread, to stick a pin in it, and throw it to one of those hungry dogs who snap up anything without biting it, and then to watch and see what would happen.' Let us hope that one day the dog will bite his tormentor and chase him down the lane.

To take another instance: consider the painting of that time. I am referring to the work of C. D. Friedrich, Runge, Kersting, Rottmann, Kügelgen, Ludwig Richter, and many others. These painters are usually called romantics—a most inappropriate term. Their calm and serene pictures (mostly portraits and landscapes) depict the world as it is; men and trees, plains and hills, unfold their pure existence under the quiet power of some secret, magic spell. It is a humble art, discarding the personal brilliancy of the virtuoso, yet the mind of the artist seems to have imparted, in a more indirect way, its own serenity and peace to the objects of nature. Look at G. F. Kersting's panel 'The Elegant Reader', which is in Weimar. There we see a man sitting at his desk in a simply furnished room and reading by the light of a lamp. Nothing more. Yet triviality has gone; everything is (as it ought to be) final, important, and great. It is a promising sign that the work of Kersting and kindred artists should appeal so strongly to the present generation. We look upon that quiet, homely world with deep emotion, knowing how precious it is, and how vulnerable. About the middle of the century this great art was fading away. The date is worth noting.

The spirit of these paintings is akin to the work of the great Austrian writer Adalbert Stifter. His books reveal the ways and aspirations, the joys and sorrows, of men living a full but tranquil life. Eichendorff, Stifter's contemporary, represents a similar spirit. His famous story *Aus dem Leben eines Taugenichts* (1826) is one of the treasures of German literature; its beauty and exquisite charm have been enjoyed by later generations as the happy echo of a better bygone world, yet the real distinction of this noble book is its human purity and spiritual health. The general character of the time, reflected in its literature and art, throws some new light on the policy of reaction. Metternich knew that there was still much left worth protecting. Tranquillity had not yet been swept away by Kleist's and Fichte's 'higher patriotism' or by the maniacal virtue of men like Karl Sand, the murderer of Kotzebue.

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Hölderlin has expressed that basic principle of human happiness which was then at stake, in one of his sonorous, orphic lines :

Es leuchtet über festem Boden
Schöner dem sicheren Mann sein Himmel.¹

¹ The sky shines more beautifully, over the firm earth, upon the man who lives in safety (sure of himself).

VII

THE ADVANCE OF DEMOCRACY

The second period of the nineteenth century was antagonistic to the first in character and temperament. The Revolution of 1848 marks its beginning. Democracy made a bid for power and failed. What was the significance and what were the consequences of this great event?

The roots of the Revolution go back to the broken promises of kings. The liberal legend holds that the war of liberation in 1813 had been fought by the Germans in order to gain a constitution, as the reward of their exertions. This cannot be maintained. Men had taken up arms to drive out the invader; that was the motive to which both proclamations, Frederick William's and Kutosov's, had appealed. The new nationalism which has been described in Chapter V rushed forward into a springtide of wild and exuberant joy. The situation in 1813 when, quite suddenly, the hour of liberation struck, certainly called for excitement. Patriotism, however, assumed for the first time in German history an almost delirious fervour. There is a great difference between a man who is prepared to die and a man who wants to. One is sane, a steadfast defender of his country, the other one, in love with death, is carried away by dark hellish currents. Patriotism of this new delirious kind animated the Germans, notably the Prussians, when they rose against Napoleon. The constitutional ideal was cherished (in a rather quiet way), by a considerable section of the educated class, it had not yet spread further. The whole problem was still in the background and did not influence the war. Waterloo, as we know, was not won by Old Etonians, however admirably trained on their famous playing-fields, nor was Napoleon overthrown by an army of German Liberals, fighting for constitutional rights.

The situation changed quickly after 1815. The Federal Act of the German Confederation had stipulated that a system of representation would be established in every principality, and on the 22nd of May 1815, the King of Prussia had promised a Representative Assembly. The fulfilment of these promises was postponed indefinitely. Metternich's misgivings influenced Frederick William III and Prussia devoted herself to the improvement of her administration, creating a type of civil servant whose integrity was outstanding. Broken promises, however, have

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always grave effects in history. The liberal opposition grew sour, embittered, and, in the end, turbulent; debarred from all political work, it was forced into the sterile sphere of excitement, protest, and vituperation. The constitutional ideal became a shibboleth; its adherents believed that the clue to all political problems had been entrusted to them and that the establishment of a representative system could transform every country inevitably into a worthy and happy community. The present generation living in a badly battered post-liberal world has learnt the lesson that order and stability are obviously not ensured by democratic institutions and that civic health is a much more complex affair than the early liberal doctrinaires were ready to believe.

It would be unfair to blame the German liberals too severely. Dogmatism and revolutionary exasperation were the results of the political inactivity to which the princes had condemned their subjects. Agitation seized the opportunity. The French Revolution came to life again; its legend shone. It was considered a privilege to join some gallant band of German Neo-Jacobins and other benefactors bringing civic virtue, enlightenment, and welfare, conveniently enshrined in a handy ballot box. Metternich was perfectly right when he watched the political agitation among German students with suspicion. Ludwig Jahn who had great influence on the younger undergraduates was fundamentally a barbarous and farcical man, though his schemes of physical training had indisputable merits. He was the first promoter of modern physical training. Yet he aimed higher. His book "*Deutsche Volkheit*" in which he advocates the new self-assertive patriotism, is unintentionally very funny. The effects of this patriotic agitation (of which Jahn was but one exponent) were, however, not funny at all. Sand, a student of theology, having assassinated Kotzebue, as the agent and instrument of a hated régime, knelt down in the street and offered his thanks to God. A university professor who was afterwards deposed (and rightly so) called the deed unlawful and immoral, but nevertheless, 'a beautiful sign of the time'. Another brand of liberal propaganda abandoned the hectic turbulent patriotism and favoured a spirit of emancipated modernism rejecting and, indeed, abusing all traditions because they were considered irksome and obsolete restrictions. Christianity had to bear the brunt of the attack; it was accused of interfering with man's sensual pleasures! This school of thought, represented by very able and gifted writers (such as Heine), called itself 'the young Germany'—An ill-chosen name, for complete lack of reverence is not a sign of youth.

In 1815 the right moment had come to introduce constitutional government in a practical yet prudent way, taking into account, as Stein suggested, the local and historical peculiarities. This might have led to a

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steady and gradual growth. But the chance was missed. Liberalism became a demagogic revolutionary force—and allied itself with the mass emotion of modern nationalism, thus gaining sufficient momentum to launch a formidable attack. When the revolutionary bourgeoisie entered the struggle in 1848, the feet of those determined to bury the bourgeois system together with its constitutional ideals were already at the door. The Communist Manifesto was published in winter 1847–8.

In the nineteenth century, governments could still be overthrown by ill-armed citizens putting up barricades. To the helpless victims of modern tyranny this must sound almost like a fairy-tale—too good to be true. The revolution of 1848 achieved spectacular initial successes. Metternich fled to England; the nationalities in Austria stirred, and threatened the state with disruption. The King of Prussia was humiliated and forced into submission by his own subjects. A German Parliament of great integrity assumed the legislative power. The revolution had broken out in March; by the end of the year it was defeated, and the desperate local attempts to reverse this military decision were of no avail. How was this dramatic development possible?

The French Revolution had won the day because the King could not rely upon his troops. It would be more accurate to say: he failed to rally them, therefore they became unreliable. In 1848 the Prussian and Austrian armies were not infected by the revolution. The military power was therefore still at the command of the governments when they had given way to the first onslaught of the revolution. Restoration was possible, it was, on the whole, it seems, an easy task. Some bitter fighting took place in Austria because Italian, Hungarian, and Czech nationalism had joined issue with the constitutionalists. In Prussia things went smoothly. When the government troops under the command of General von Wrangel entered the capital, the commandant of the revolutionary guards declared he would only give way to force. Wrangel sat down on a chair in front of the building where the Prussian Parliament had its meetings and declared in a friendly way: 'Force has come'. Within fifteen minutes Assembly and guards had cleared away. The sympathies of the Berlin population were on the side of the troops. Flowers were showered upon the marching columns. Prussians, it seems, have no talent for revolutions. If there *must* be a revolution, then they prefer it to be organized and directed from above. The National Socialists have done their best to fulfil such extraordinary wishes. Whenever some spontaneous outburst was due, the necessary orders were given and when the synagogues were set ablaze, the fire brigade turned up to protect the neighbouring houses. Was there ever such a mixture of anarchy and order?

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Treitschke has poured ridicule upon the revolution which failed, so he said, because it was made and directed by political amateurs and professors. This verdict is unfair. The lawyers in the French National Assembly were also doctrinaires and they were more amateurish than the members of the German Parliament. The blunders of the French politicians were numerous, yet their cause won through. Why did the Germans fail? The Frankfurt Parliament was not an assembly of talkers and fools, many of its members were men of experience, knowledge, and integrity. Presumably Germany never had a better Parliament, less affected by the low impulses of propaganda and party strife which was going to damage and eventually to wreck parliamentary life at a later stage. Yet the very existence of the Frankfurt Parliament was an act of anticipation. The task of the deputies was to create the German 'Reich', which they claimed already to represent. As the actual power was still in the hands of the governments opposed to the scheme of effective unification, this task was not within reach of parliamentary activities. Frederick William IV had declared in the hour of intimidation that he was ready to merge Prussia in Germany. Since then he had recovered, and when the National Assembly after many long and involved debates decided to offer the imperial crown to the King of Prussia, he refused. The Frankfurt Parliament, he believed, was not entitled to make such an offer; if he accepted it, he feared to become the 'serf of the Revolution'. This was the end of the story. The revolution which, at the beginning, had made the kings tremble, was now (in April 1849) no longer in a position to put any pressure upon them—the game was up. The civil war that followed the king's refusal was fierce but remained localized. In Dresden Richard Wagner was fighting on the barricades. Thirty years later he had changed; by then the composer of the Bourgeois Age, idolized by his admirers, had condescended to the 'Reich' and other forms of insincerity. The belated struggle was in vain. The power of the governments had been consolidated; it could not be successfully challenged.

After the revolution a Berlin tailor painted the Prussian eagle over the door of his shop and the words underneath:

Unter Deinen Flügeln
Kann ich ruhig bügeln.¹

The tailor, unfortunately, was wrong. The Prussian eagle is not a bird that presages peace. A worthier epilogue to the Revolution was given by Alfred Rethel in a series of masterly drawings called 'Auch ein Totentanz' (Another Dance of Death). Rethel depicts with an artistic power that reminds us of Dürer the humbug of revolutionary propaganda and

¹ I can peacefully press under the shadow of thy wings.

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the misery to which it led. No great work of art was produced on the side of the revolution, inspired by its spirit.

What would have been the general effect if the revolution had won? Would we to-day be living in a better, fairly stable world? The new 'Reich' that might have been founded in 1848 would have been certainly less permeated with military traditions, less infected with military pride, than the state which Bismarck established in 1871, after a victorious war. The high level of the Frankfurt Parliament should also be taken into account; well-meaning and serious minded men were then in charge of affairs. But who can say what the assembly would have looked like after the next election? We must not build our hopes on shifting sands. The liberal illusion that democracy ensures peace will fail to impress the present generation, nor would it have impressed the generation of Thucydides. It seems, on the contrary, that it has become increasingly difficult to handle the problems of foreign policy in a calm and reasonable way since public opinion has gained a decisive influence on affairs. Nor do the actual reactions of public opinion, the sudden changes, the emotional impetus, recommend themselves as valuable contributions to the solution of a difficult political problem. Perhaps the defenders of the system will remind us that there is also a brighter aspect. An indolent or callous government might be forced to act by what is called the righteous indignation of the masses. Justice may thus find its champion. This, certainly, is excellent. But even the humanitarian *démarche*, urged on by public indignation, can lead in foreign affairs to unexpected and most undesirable results if the realities of the situation are not properly estimated. There may be more victims and sufferers at the end of the action than there were at the beginning.

The strong emotional element (combined with vagueness of perception) which Democracy has introduced into foreign policy is in any case a danger. Mr. Trevelyan, talking about the peace settlement in 1815, remarks that 'its merits in relation to the treatment of France were owing not a little to the absence of all democratic control, in the critical treaty-making months that follow the end of a great war, while popular passions are still at blood-heat'. This is perfectly true. It is very doubtful, therefore, whether a democratic Germany would have avoided the clashes with her neighbours. The susceptibilities of modern nationalism were leading inevitably to critical situations. What reason have we to believe that the German democrats would have been able to steer a reasonable course independent of public opinion? The supranational principle which the Holy Roman Empire had represented was at that time no longer seriously considered. Not for one moment did the Frankfurt Parliament contemplate the possibility of including other nation-

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alities within the borders of the 'Reich'. Such propositions were regarded as an absurdity that would endanger the stability of the state. It seems therefore that there was little chance of sparing Europe the bitter experience of nationalism rampant. All nations, one after the other, were marching along this road, full of confidence that there was no alternative, and showering congratulations upon every people that joined this general procession under the banner of the National and Sovereign State. They did not know that their road was leading to the battlefields.

Dangers and disadvantages connected with the representative system must not be allowed to obscure its great guiding idea of calling the nation into counsel. It is risky to discard or to discredit the political wisdom and experience behind this idea. 'Absolute power corrupts.' This dictum of Lord Acton is often quoted to-day and always with full approval. But important reservations ought to be made in order to clarify the issue. It must be remembered that hereditary monarchy had evolved some safeguards which were by no means negligible. Where such safeguards are missing as in the case of the political upstart and usurper, the truth of Acton's statement becomes apparent. The prominent soldiers of fortune are intoxicated with power and, even more so, with mass acclamation. This spectacle we know only too well. It is not so much the absence of parliamentary control as the insidious combination of violent rule with frantic popular approval that gives modern tyranny its loathsome character. Men who are accustomed to the reign of law look with complete amazement at countries where this combination holds sway. Their own experience and also their knowledge of the past does not throw any light on this very modern affair. The dictators of the twentieth century cannot be compared with the absolute kings of the past; their system is canalized ochlocracy. Hence its iron grip. Hence the defiance of fairness and mercy. Under such conditions corruption affects both masters and subjects. The scramble for power, however, the heated contest between political parties has also a decomposing effect. Absolute agitation corrupts because lies are required to secure success. Unless opposition to the government is regarded as a noble and responsible task, as a necessary corrective function, in fact, an office, the representative system is bound to degenerate. The nation's council chamber must not become a political arena such as the French National Assembly had been. It is only tradition that can produce the attitude of responsibility and independence which befits the deputies of a nation. Germany lacked tradition of the kind; whether she would have been able to develop it, had the Revolution succeeded, is an open question. The triumph of Prussia certainly thwarted the growth of a genuine democratic tradition, conscious of its purpose and function.

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The Revolution, however, was not altogether defeated. One of its most cherished principles, nationalism, survived and eventually won through, pushing aside the less virulent dynastic idea. The constitutional ideal did also find its fulfilment, at least nominally. Representative assemblies had been forced upon Prussia and Austria. In Prussia, constitutional government remained, in Austria it was abolished when reaction set in. Some twenty years later, a German National Parliament, then called the 'Reichstag', became one of the pillars of Bismarck's state; the victorious Prussian statesman gave the nation (admittedly under changed circumstances) what the Revolution had desired.

Carl Schurz gives in his autobiography an account of a conversation which he had with Bismarck in 1867. A meeting of symbolical significance! Schurz, the revolutionary of 1848 and Bismarck, then the much-admired Prime Minister of Prussia, who had just won the war against Austria. Bismarck treated his guest with the utmost courtesy, almost like an old friend. They talked about Schurz's exploit when in 1850 he had rescued Kinkel, his teacher and fellow-revolutionary, out of a Prussian prison. Then the conversation turned to politics and the danger of French intervention in 1866 was discussed. 'It would have created a new situation,' Bismarck said, 'but I knew a way out which may perhaps surprise you.' Schurz was indeed keen to hear. 'What would have been the effect,' Bismarck continued, 'if I had appealed under such circumstances to the patriotism of the nation by proclaiming the Frankfurt Constitution of 1848-9?' Schurz: 'I think, enthusiasm would have swept the whole country and you could have created a united nation. But would you really have been prepared to adopt the poor orphan of 1848?' Bismarck: 'Why not? Certainly, the constitution has some features which I do not like. But fundamentally it is not so different from what I am aiming at. Whether the old Master (e.g. the king) would have agreed seems doubtful. But with Napoleon at the gates, he might.'

How the old liberal must have enjoyed the siren song of the great cynic! Schurz looked upon democracy as an ideal, in itself true. He had fought for it. Bismarck regarded it as a political explosive, good to have in store, yet dangerous to handle. The Chancellor believed in benevolent autocracy, he was out of sympathy with the democratic form of government. He was not really prepared to respect the opinion of a Parliament if it differed from his own on vital issues. In 1862 he had broken the constitution and carried out his armament programme against the will of the Prussian Parliament. He had been called into office because the Minister of War, General von Roon, considered him the right man for that special job. At that time Bismarck actually over-estimated the risks of his unlawful enterprise. He reminded the king of Charles I in order to

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appeal to his soldierly courage. His disapproval of parliamentary claims remained unshaken when military success had silenced the opposition almost completely. He certainly applauded most graciously this change of opinion but he cannot have respected it. Schurz, surely, was not fully aware of the fact that he was talking to a bitter enemy. He was too ready to swallow the bait and his remark about 'the enthusiasm that would have swept the country' rather confirms our fears that German democracy, had it come to power, might have been rather turbulent. Anyway, democratic responsibility and belief in absolute rule cannot be successfully interfused. The Bismarck Reich exemplifies this, not its actual constitution but its political atmosphere on which the working of the constitution depended.

More important than all these political developments were the changes which the establishment of the industrial system imposed. England was the leading country in that enterprise. Germany lagged behind. At the middle of the century she was still 'undeveloped', to use the banker's jargon. But industry and commerce soon gained momentum, and the German bourgeoisie, with a pioneer spirit, seized the opportunity which science and machinery offered. Political liberty for which their fathers had fought on the barricades had been denied to the German merchants and industrialists; wealth, however, they got. The new accumulated riches were securing political influence independent of constitutional channels. Thus the advance of the bourgeoisie seemed to have been not really affected by the defeat of democracy in 1848. Everything seemed to be going in their favour. Hopes were flying high. Only a few observers noticed at that time that progress was closely linked up with decline and that both movements were proceeding with the same rapidity.

Jacob Burckhardt wrote in 1849: 'I have no hopes for the future. I believe that both democrats and proletarians, in spite of their most desperate efforts, will have to give way to despotism.' And in 1872 he remarked: 'I should like to draw your attention to the following fact. The human mind and its values will soon be forced into a blind alley (*in die Klemme geraten*) by the rapid advance of material progress . . . by a series of wars of which we have only seen the beginning.' He adds: 'The new, great, and liberating force must emerge from the German spirit, in opposition to power, wealth, and business; this new cause must find its martyrs, it must be by its very nature independent of political and economic catastrophes. But what will it be? That question I cannot answer.'

Whilst thoughtful men were discussing such anxious problems in their correspondence, the outside world was full of rejoicing. Man was conquering nature. All his activities (so the progressive believed) would

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eventually benefit from the increase of economic power and scientific knowledge. There will be an abundance of leisure, they thought, and the fine arts will flourish. The Utopians fell into a trance, from which they have not yet recovered; puffs of rosy smoke are still rising from their chambers, where they are planning the Tower of Babel in a truly Wellsian manner.

In actual fact, Art deteriorated. It became experimental. More than that—the creative mind began to disregard almost completely the response of an uncongenial society. This led to deadly isolation. There seemed to be, in fact, no other alternative. In the end, the artistic expression became a kind of monologue, only comprehensible to the speaker himself. Who can doubt that this development was tragic and in its final effects inhuman? Friedrich Hölderlin made once a profound remark on human nature. He wrote: ‘*Seit ein Gespräch wir sind . . .*’ (Since we are a conversation . . .). This, surely, is not meant to encourage the gregarious and talkative type—Heaven forbid!—Hölderlin’s words reveal an essential law of our existence. The human mind, thrown back on to itself, must go to pieces through lack of communication and support. Modern art, in its genuine representatives, entered the purgatory of this experience. In all European countries we notice the same thing. The sensitive observer will be deeply moved by the sounds of sorrow that come from the waste land. The best German example is, I think, the Austrian poet Georg Trakl (died 1914). Rilke’s *Duineser Elegien* should also be mentioned here. The deadly isolation of the autonomous individual has been poignantly formulated by Alexei Khomiakov, the great Slavophil: ‘Modern society in its decay releases every individual to the freedom of his own impotence.’

A period marked by such visitations cannot be considered whole and healthy. The crisis in Art was accompanied by a gradually developing crisis in education. As time went on, it became apparent that the prosperity and success of the bourgeoisie was but a screen behind which spiritual bankruptcy was trying to hide itself. The problem was soon recognized in its magnitude. Both Nietzsche and Dostoevsky used all their power of insight to cope with this task though they came to very different conclusions. The general breaking down of values and standards affects the young most because they are helpless without guidance. Family life in Germany was losing its formative influence. The idea began to spread that education must be taken out of the hands of the parents and be entrusted to small school communities which, in their isolation, would produce a new, invigorating spirit.

Fichte had said that before; now his hour had struck. Fichte’s educational ideas were in keeping with his political views (which have already

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been explained in Chapter V); they were equally revolutionary, nourished by the same spirit. He wanted the younger generation to be separated from the society around, confident that education, if only strictly isolated, would rejuvenate the world. Greater men than Fichte have been deceived by the same illusion. Fichte wrote: 'In contact with us the young must become rotten, that is inevitable . . . we must remove them from the pestilential atmosphere of our company and provide for them a purer abode.' There follows a most revealing remark. The educators, according to Fichte, must be men who 'whatever their real condition may be, must have learnt at least (through continual practice) always to remember that children are watching them, they must be capable of pulling themselves together for the time being.' Indeed a shrewd but unconvincing advice! Can Fichte really be regarded as a great educationalist, though he did not know that the decisive formative influence proceeds from what a man *is*, not from what he pretends to be? The messianic tinge which education assumed was a natural product of the revolutionary spirit. The pedagogue will presumably always be inclined to over-estimate his influence and to attribute changes for the better that can be noticed in his pupils to his own labours and arrangements. The revolutionary educationalist, however, sets himself a more ambitious task. Condemning society in its present form he thinks it possible to create a new and better mankind through education. He is, as a rule, not really worried by the problem—how a corrupt generation can possibly hope to transform and ennoble the young. These reformers either believe that corruption has not seriously affected themselves or they rely (rather naïvely) upon the machinery of education which, so they hope, will do the trick if it is only established on a very broad basis. This fallacy is rampant to-day.

There were quite an appreciable number of people in Germany who thought that they were well equipped to save the civilization along Fichtian lines. Among them it was Gustav Wyneken who caused the greatest commotion. He founded a boarding-school in Thuringia and looked upon that place as the centre of a general rejuvenation. There were not many attempts like his and the influence of such schools was limited. They were expensive places. The water of new life (thanks to Heaven) could not be given freely.

The general idea, however, that education is capable of determining the future was widely accepted; it was supplemented by the belief that the educational approach should be experimental—the bolder the better. Yet the opposite is true. The primary function of education is to preserve the proven standards of the past. Germany's education became more and more experimental as time went on. This was considered a

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sign of progress. It would be unfair to deny that valuable methodical innovations have been introduced; physical training improved remarkably though its importance was over-estimated—a wrong emphasis which, later on, the Totalitarian State overstressed still more. The experimental keenness did not indicate renewed creative power, it reflected the weary spirit of relativism which had permeated society. There was no longer any common belief in ends. Without such ultimate certainty, education loses its strength and meaning though it might well widen its scope and improve its methods. Once relativism has been accepted, education is confined to the narrow limits of training whether that name be used or not. Training attempts to make young people, let us say, fit and efficient without worrying about the question what purpose these accomplishments should serve. It is believed that this question will solve itself. So it does, but not always in a manner which the liberal-minded trainers naïvely expect. In Germany, labour camps and a thing called 'Wehrsport' (pre-military training) existed before 1933 on a small and voluntary basis. These training centres paved the way for the National Socialists; they were there in order to be seized. There was a great deal of fluent talk about service as the supreme purpose of life to be achieved best (so it was proposed) in squads and battalions. Well, the master ready to be served was soon to arrive on the spot. He found the mules harnessed. The trainers, with blank faces, were standing to attention.

The educational work of Kurt Hahn (begun in Germany and continued in England)¹ has some bearing on these problems, not as a final solution but as a thoughtful approach and a noteworthy attempt. Hahn visualizes training centres as part of a larger community, the core of which is to be a boarding school. The idea is to combine the more technical and superficial purpose of training with the fuller and slower life that education requires. What is the truth behind this venture? Modern training lends itself as a willing tool to the dehumanizing tendencies of the present age. Unless it is incorporated into some system (difficult to evolve) which is governed by truly human and well-proven values, the rising tide of efficiency will force the defenders of tradition into the isolated position of outsiders who might perhaps be allowed to continue a slightly musty museum existence, provided they do not interfere with the drastic pursuits of the brave new world. It would be rash to consider schools capable of becoming centres like the old monasteries which, let us remember, saved civilization but did not set out to do so. To attribute similar power to education is an error. There is no historical

¹ The two schools, Salem and Gordonstoun, assume through their dependence upon the chivalrous political philosophy of Prince Max von Baden a wider significance. Salem's struggle against the Nazis was creditable.

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evidence that would justify this confidence. Education cannot lead. Decisive changes always take place among grown-up men, in society at large, and after some time they influence and guide the work of the schoolmaster. It is not the other way round. But this, surely, does not entitle us to dispense with contributions which educationalists can offer. On the other hand, who would like to dogmatize on issues of such vital importance? It is, after all, unwise to say: this or that will never happen. The unexpected, in human affairs, defies the analysts.

The Totalitarian State and its preceding propaganda pounced upon a relativist society, broke up (amongst many other things) the elaborate and partly excellent system of education which the Weimar Republic had established.¹ How was this triumph of brutal nonsense over good will possible? National Socialism, contrary to the well-meaning relativists, proclaimed ends; it deified the nation and told the individual in a hoarse voice what to do: to sacrifice itself and, preferably, others as well. Parents, Church, and any other competitor were excluded from the sphere of education, their rights abolished, their attempts ridiculed. The State claimed the youth of the whole nation as trainees, one might better say, as common property.

The Bourgeois age provided no guidance. This incapacity is the mark of relativism. What it did provide was an ever-increasing abundance of possible and conflicting views. Consequently the literature of that time reflects a growing perplexity of the younger generation. Compare Eichendorff's *Taugenichts* with Hermann Hesse's *Unterm Rad* (1906) or Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks* (1901). The high spirits and buoyancy which are so typical of Eichendorff's young men and boys gave way to sadness and an increased vulnerability of mind. In Germany an intense sense of dissatisfaction led to a rebellion of the young, called 'Die Jugendbewegung'. It was an abortive rebellion but as a symptom it was a most interesting event. Eventually the movement, having already passed its climax, merged in the political youth organization of the Totalitarian State. The boys who had run away from their parents and schoolmasters in order to discover a new healthy world where they could breathe freely and live, were caught in the nets of political desperadoes. This will not be the end of the story. In Trakl's visions, so full of peril and hazard, there appears again and again, like a luminous spectre, *die Gestalt des Knaben*—the image of the boy—as the symbol of life endangered but also of hope.

¹ Prof. Nohl, Göttingen, is the representative of this educational reform work at its best.

VIII

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The period which has to be considered now covered less than twenty-five years, from Bismarck's dismissal in 1890 to the outbreak of the Great War in 1914. Considering its shortness it seems hardly more than an episode, but there were important connections linking it up with the past, and if we take into account the mighty revival of Imperialism under National Socialist rule we may feel inclined to call the reign of the Kaiser a prelude.

It may be said with some justification that the real beginning of this period is the triumph of Prussia in 1871. The establishment of the Bismarck state certainly provided the economic and military strength which made further schemes of expansion possible. But Bismarck's foreign policy after 1871 was not imperialistic. He resisted such temptations because he feared for the safety of the Reich should it ever get involved in ambitious schemes that would be resisted by the older Powers and bring about their co-operation. He suffered, as Count Schuvaloff put it, from the 'cauchemar des coalitions'. It was only natural that he should; for he could not fail to realize that the Reich was not safe in spite of its power. The confidence of Europe was needed. But Bismarck himself had gained the reputation of being the man who pursued a policy of 'blood and iron'. He had coined that dreadful phrase himself before the Austro-Prussian war, referring to the German problem which, so he stated, could only be solved by force. This reputation he had to live down. Inside Germany he was always admired as the 'Iron Chancellor'; he had piled success upon success, thus winning over a decisive section of his nation to the belief in sheer force. But this deplorable effect does not alter the fact that he steered a prudent course after unification had been achieved.

The Chancellor needed all his diplomatic skill and experience, also his authority (which he never failed to stress) to carry out his cautious policy. In 1866 Bismarck had brought off a war that nobody wanted except he himself; in 1870 he had staged another war by rousing patriotic excitement, but in 1886 (only to mention one crisis) he prevented war though many would have welcomed it. Serious frontier incidents that could have been used in those days of excitement to start the avalanche, were settled by Bismarck's reasonable and pacific attitude. It cannot be

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doubted that he could have got the necessary public support, had he chosen to embark upon a policy of further expansion, colonial or otherwise. The difference between Bismarck and his successors is more than a question of diplomatic technique* (no doubt that Bismarck's skill was superior to, let us say, Bülow's or Bethmann Hollweg's), the point is: he considered the Reich 'saturated'; they did not. Therefore it is justifiable to regard 1890 as the turning point.

Kaiser Wilhelm II did not want to break deliberately with the traditions of Bismarck's foreign policy. At the beginning of his reign, however, he was so full of self-confidence that he thought he could get on better without the restraining advice of the experienced statesman. He resented Bismarck's autocratic ways and the firmness with which he clung to power. The old man, the Kaiser thought, was really no longer needed. It was a characteristic move when he went to Friedrichsruh to consult Bismarck on a new type of uniform that was to be introduced. Such a request was almost an insult. The emperor's self-confidence was not justified. Wilhelm II was not altogether without sense; in his calmer moments he showed considerable political intelligence. Yet he was unstable, excitable, and extremely meddlesome, giving advice on foreign affairs even to other nations. The foreign policy of the Reich became vacillating and therefore alarming because its ultimate motives and ambitions were not clear to the outside world. They were not quite clear to the promoters themselves. The German politicians, hampered in their work by the Kaiser's impulsive nature, lived from hand to mouth.

No interpretation of this feeble foreign policy could be more off the point than the idea that it was guided by a plan. The opposite is true: there was no plan, there was an embarrassing mixture of tendencies and motives—hence the political blunders. Russia's foreign policy, strongly influenced by pan-Slavist circles (rather against the wish of the Tsar) was more determined and purposeful than Germany's; and the response which the Russian rapprochement found in France was equally unmistakable. The bellicose demonstrations in Toulon (mentioned in Chapter III) were unique; there was no equivalent in Germany. Burckhardt, a severe critic of the Reich but an unbiased observer of international affairs, wrote seven years before Toulon: 'In der Kriegsfrage ist die ganze Welt fürchterlich verlogen; offenkundig bedroht ist nur Deutschland.'¹ The Franco-Russian rapprochement could not be misunderstood: it was a threat.

Imperialism, the expansion of political power, was a temptation to which all strong governments were exposed because mercantile and

¹ About the danger of war the whole world is frightfully hypocritical; obviously only Germany is threatened.

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financial interests were working in that direction. In the twentieth century the world had already been more or less divided up among the colonial powers. Yet there were still many avenues open that could be explored by the enterprising spirit of commerce. Generally speaking, the strange illusion was still alive that the whole world had been given by providence to the European nations (or some of them) as a playground and as a mine of enrichment. In fairness it must be added that there have always been Europeans, admirable men like Albert Schweitzer, who thought it their duty to atone for misdeeds and omissions of which their less sensitive fellow men had been guilty. A slow and gradual change in the general attitude towards imperialism could be observed. Flagrant acts of conquest, though by no means the only method of aggrandisement, were beginning to cause unease. In England, the Boer War had divided public opinion because many English patriots were not prepared to identify the cause of their country with a policy of imperialistic aggression. In Germany a similar split amongst the population could be observed. The majority in fact, was neither sufficiently interested nor sufficiently trained to be able to watch intelligently developments in foreign affairs. The average citizen felt at ease believing that his country's military strength would protect his personal life from any serious disturbance. This rather sheepish attitude (to use a strong term) exasperated the small minority of ardent imperialists, who advocated a policy of expansion, either on continental or on colonial lines. There was yet another group, the spokesmen of the bankers. They were in favour of 'peaceful penetration', the conquest of foreign markets and the acquisition of 'spheres of interest'. Such an enterprise needed, of course, the political assistance of a powerful state. 'Peaceful penetration' is therefore a euphemism and its promoters are inclined to forget the grim reality of military power which is nevertheless an always present factor in their own calculations. Hence the tendency to play with the fire in a rather innocent way and to reel into disaster like a drunkard into a ditch. Those who plan military conquest are perhaps more unscrupulous than these mercantile imperialists but they are certainly more aware of the risks involved.

In between these various sections which represented fairly definite views, there was floating the fluid mass of waverers, people who were influenced by these different opinions and managed, indeed, to hold all of them simultaneously in a rather vague and confused manner. It was not to be expected that such a multifarious public opinion would salubriously affect the decisions of a government that had at its disposal a mighty war machine but no ideas.

Future generations, I think, will marvel at the self-imposed danger

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under which the European nations chose to live. The spectacle of highly armed countries ready for war at any moment and devoting a good deal of their energies and resources to the steady improvement of their armament is at the present moment still too familiar to be estimated in its full strangeness. Up to a certain point this development was perhaps inevitable. If there has to be preparation for war, it must be done competently. To do the job badly, would not be a sign of political morality but rather of incompetence. The rapid advance of science set the pace. The danger was, of course, recognized, sometimes even by military men. But the attempts to introduce methods of arbitration could not succeed unless the idea of the sovereign state was abandoned. Germany's political and military spokesmen were quite incapable of seeing the seriousness of these suggestions. They considered them fantastic and ridiculous, even insulting. Wilhelm II remarked: 'I trust in God and my unsheathed sword and I spew (the Kaiser used a stronger word) on all resolutions of international conferences.' The German major von Egidy who welcomed the Tsar's peace plan (1899) was a voice crying in the wilderness. Belief in the almost divine character of military force was widely spread in Germany. The shadow of Fridericus Rex!

International arbitration is still the crucial problem to-day. An ever-increasing number of men in all countries wants such a solution. If they could only see their way to transform their longings into a political force! The chances are slight. A widespread desire can never be taken as a token of imminent fulfilment. On the contrary, unanimity often indicates an insufficient knowledge of the difficulties which have to be mastered. An effective international authority, equipped with power, cannot be established without great concessions and sacrifices. There are many who would like to see international security conveniently combined with unrestricted national independence. Therefore we must not blame the generation of 1900 too severely.

Up to the eighteenth century foreign policy was a craft. The morality behind it was often objectionable but statesmen could plan and act according to their own reason and intelligence. They were, on the whole, masters of their decisions. In Chapter VII the dangerous influence of public opinion on foreign affairs has been discussed. The armament policy was another heavy weight put upon the freedom of political decision. The very existence of a mighty instrument of war tends to influence and sometimes even to obstruct plans of foreign policy. There may be moments when political decisions are no longer free. The army and navy chiefs are often very important political figures; their talks and correspondences with colleagues of befriended countries may lead to definite though secret commitments.

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The letters which the German Commander-in-Chief Moltke exchanged with the head of the Austrian Army, Conrad von Hoetzendorff, exemplify this danger. The two generals discussed the desirability of a war against Serbia long before the Serajevo murder. Moltke expressed the view that an Austrian invasion of Serbia would be a most suitable way of challenging Russia. The two warmongers were looking out for favourable opportunities. Their fundamental agreement can be called almost a plot. When war had broken out in 1914, Moltke remarked in a letter to his friend: 'The assurance of Your Excellency that Austria will carry through the struggle in full loyalty to her obligations only confirms what I have never questioned. To give this assurance, dear comrade, was not necessary, for I would rather disbelieve in God than doubt the pledge of loyalty which we have given each other.' The fateful actions which this pledge seems to have suggested will be mentioned later. The Austrian field-marshal was worthy of his trusting friend. In his memoirs, Conrad intimates that the sequence of events which led to the outbreak of war is of little importance because war must be considered a law of nature. He labours the point, referring to volcanoes, glaciers, gales, electricity, beasts of prey, and what not. From such pseudo-philosophical nonsense the general seems to have drawn inspiration when he influenced the policy of his country in the most dangerous manner.

It is not only the bellicose spirit of influential military men and their secret machinations that have to be feared; pure technicalities might hamper the conduct of foreign affairs. To give one grotesque example: when the Kaiser in 1914, after Russia had called up its armies, was going to sign the order of mobilization, he would have preferred, for political reasons, to keep the German armies back from the French frontier and to direct the flow of his legions only towards the East. Moltke answered: 'That is technically impossible.' 'Your uncle would have given me a different reply,' said the Kaiser angrily; but he had to sign. Moltke, shattered by this conversation, went home, and, according to his own account, sat down in his room and cried. Wilhelm II made the bitter discovery (too late to be useful) that power does not necessarily secure freedom of action. The war lord was chased by his own war machine. No wonder that he entered the struggle with many misgivings, unlike his callous successor, the Austrian house-painter.

German imperialism broke down in the Great War. The National Socialists thought it possible to revise the military decision of 1918. Hitler made it quite clear that he considered the war of 1939 a continuation of the last one. The theatrical setting which he chose in 1940 for the signing of the armistice, is ample proof. Hitler's brazen foreign policy was certainly based on plans. He may have hoped that threats would

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carry him further than they actually did but he must have known that his ultimate scheme of continental expansion and domination (clearly outlined in *Mein Kampf*) could only be carried out by war.

The Kaiser had no such programme. He was in favour of mercantile expansion accompanied by a spectacular increase of political prestige. No evidence can be produced to prove that the Kaiser ever contemplated a policy of military aggression. He was a braggart; foolish words he did speak, always on the spur of the moment, yielding, unfortunately, like his ancestor Friedrich Wilhelm IV, to the thrill of eloquence. It will be difficult to find in the annals of oratory a more stupid pronouncement than the Kaiser's spurt of unheeded words when he addressed his soldiers embarking for China at the time of the Boxer rebellion. He extolled Attila and his Huns as a worthy example of ruthlessness to be followed by the German expeditionary force. How could he be surprised if people thought he meant what he said? The lack of prudence which, as we have seen, was typical of German commercial imperialism, was also a conspicuous weakness of the Kaiser himself.

The crucial problem of German foreign policy before 1914 was the naval programme. England, though deeply alarmed, was prepared to come to an agreement. These negotiations failed through Germany's intransigent attitude. The European nations in both camps were tightening the bonds of mutual obligations in a dangerous way. The conflict with England (it soon became also the pivot of the military combat) had been by no means the desire of the German nation. There were only few Anglophobes; Admiral von Tirpitz was one of them. The Reichstag accepted the naval programme of the government without regarding it, however, as a basis of a deliberate policy. We are reminded of Friedrich Wilhelm I who built up a great army though he did not quite know what to do with it.

How can we sum up the political changes which the era of German imperialism coinciding with the reign of Wilhelm II had brought about? The position of Germany had deteriorated considerably since Bismarck's time. In spite of its splendid façade the Reich was less safe. The reason is not far to seek: the international confidence which Bismarck had been gradually winning, was lost under the Kaiser. 'The wire to St. Petersburg,' so highly valued by the chancellor and also by Wilhelm I, was broken and the Kaiser proved a clumsy artisan when he tried to mend it personally in private talks with the Tsar (1905). The friendly relations with England (for which Bismarck had been ready to pay the price) were no longer considered essential. New conditions had arisen. Since 1893 the Franco-Russian co-operation had to be regarded as a firmly established fact unlikely to be shaken in the near future.

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England stood aloof; how far her actual commitments went was unknown, yet it had to be reckoned with that the Triple Entente might be transformed into a Triple Alliance. The German statesmen, including the Kaiser, were inclined to discount this possibility. But in actual fact the Anglo-French naval agreement of 1912 (which was kept secret) had already restricted England's freedom of action considerably. In the sphere of international relationships the reign of Wilhelm II had obviously produced negative results. This was mainly due to two reasons. First, the jumpy foreign policy of the Reich; secondly, the highly competent but very self-assertive militaristic system which stood at the disposal of a vacillating government though it could not be identified with it. For such was the weight of authority which the German Army possessed that its political will must be counted as a distinct and separate factor. The Great War was the outcome of a general permanent crisis. The relations between the countries of Europe had deteriorated to such an extent that Sazonoff's remark seems no exaggeration: 'On se croit quelque fois dans une maison de fous.' We have not yet sufficiently emerged from this period ourselves to realize how unhealthy and peculiar the conditions were which modern nationalism, armament race and the generally accepted patterns of official political thought imposed upon a continent which was, in fact, *one* house, though bitterly divided.

If we examine the divisions and animosities more closely, a strange fact reveals itself. The political divisions of Europe were by no means the natural consequence of enmity and hatred. During the seventeenth century Catholics and Calvinists hated each other like poison (they knew at least why!) and this tension led to the religious wars. In the twentieth century the European nations, the actual people, felt nothing but indifference towards their neighbours, a natural feeling perhaps, yet as an emotion it will hardly induce a man to fire a single shot. If what Rousseau called 'the general will' had found the means of expressing itself forcibly there would never have been a European war. Indifference breeds no war. Normal average man (not counting those who have been subjected to some perverting mental training) will only be ready to fight if they are told that they must do so in defence. A modern state that has to call up its citizens must therefore always take great care to instil the opinion that war has been forced upon a government that was trying its utmost to preserve peace.

It is not a very hard task to achieve this. The great war was fought on both sides as a war of defence. The wild outbursts of civilian enthusiasm that could be seen in many European capitals when war was declared, are no proof to the contrary. It is true, in 1914 citizens took up arms frantically, they rushed forward as if intoxicated. But one might say that

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this metropolitan enthusiasm had really nothing to do with war; the mobilization not the war intoxicated the masses. War was then an unknown thing. The delirious and infantile excitement, typical of crowd mentality, and amounting to panic and hysteria (of which the ludicrous spy-hunting was an unmistakable sign) spread through the whole of Germany, emanating from the cities.

It affected nearly everybody. Even the gentle Rilke jotted down some verses praising the God of war. No good poetry was produced except perhaps the passionate Song of Hate, written by a Jew, and half a dozen simple and genuine poems like Zuckermann's 'Reiterlied' and Lersch's 'Brüder'. All these poems, not counting Lissauer's frenzy, were melancholy and resigned. This fact is important; for poetry reveals a nation's mind. Many years after the war Georg Friedrich Jünger wrote a long poem in hexameters called 'der Krieg'—a worthy and manly (perhaps excessively manly) memorial. It is full of sadness but free from despair. The deity that the poet invokes is the earth; the sign of the Cross, he says, has fallen to the ground. The darker powers of the 'Mother' are, quite naturally, stressed; the goddess assumes the deadly character of Hecate. Jünger gives back to the dead the honour which is their due; he recaptures the genuine and distinctive meaning of the word hero—a noble and necessary enterprise after Remarque's 'Im Westen nichts Neues' had been widely accepted as a true account of the soldier's mentality. Neither the excitement at the beginning of the war nor the disillusionment which spread during the years after gives the right idea of the nation's attitude whilst the struggle was raging. Whatever we may think of the mobilization hysteria, the generation that went through the war knows well that these feverish mass emotions were not (nor could they be) the force which sustained the fighting man. 'We are in it; it is not our fault, we have to see this through,' such were the reactions.

It has been maintained by many, notably by Fr. W. Foerster, a most sincere seeker of truth, that the German nation had been thoroughly perverted by Prussian traditions and that the outlook of the whole population was therefore fundamentally different from the attitude of other nations. This is not true. Foerster's merits in unmasking German militarism are undeniable but he is fundamentally a moralist, not an historian. Moralists must simplify. They must isolate events which in reality are connected with other similar manifestations. The argument: others are no better, is irrelevant from the moralist's point of view. As a preacher of repentance Foerster is therefore inclined to under-estimate the strength of perfectly normal aspirations that remain alive amongst common people even if decisive numbers go astray. Were Foerster right, the German government should have proclaimed the Holy War of con-

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quest and domination in order to rally the Teutonic warriors. Yet it did the opposite; it turned to the civilians assuring them that the hateful job had been forced upon the nation. Readers who want to be informed about the attitude of the average German soldier during the Great War, should refer to the collection of letters written by students who fell in action. The book was published in 1929. War for war's sake had been proclaimed by some authors and they were listened to, but that perverted philosophy did never affect the masses. It was the actual war experience not the reading of books that brought into existence a philosophy of destruction not as another set of daring opinions but as an attitude of life. These problems will be discussed in the next chapter.

To sum up: What marked the general political situation in Europe before 1914 was not hostility but fear. The breakdown of international confidence and mutual trust was complete. Needless to say that these conditions offered an ideal chance for warmongers. The 'favourable opportunities' which General von Moltke was looking out for were not hard to find. He should not have been so distressed as he was when one crisis had been mastered by the diplomats, for another one was bound to come. We must turn now to details.

The menace of the Franco-Russian rapprochement has already been mentioned. There was a particularly strong aggressive spirit among officers of the Russian Army. The pseudo-mystical doctrines of Panslavism inflamed these men. Should fear and suspicion rise to feverish heights they could hope to satisfy their bellicose desire without revealing their actual policy by simply acting in the name of military necessity. The political aims of the Russian Government cannot be identified with Panslavism and its aggressive schemes. Nicholas II was bent on peace, so was his strange councillor Rasputin. The starets detested war with the primitive instinct of a peasant and he also believed that war (should it come) would bury the Romanoff dynasty beneath its debris. Had Rasputin been in St. Petersburg during the critical days of July 1914 the situation might have developed differently. But he was then confined to his home in Siberia where he was recovering from the injuries of an attempted assassination. There were, however, also different dispositions to be reckoned with. In February 1914 a conference was held in St. Petersburg (with Sazonoff in the chair) to discuss in full detail the plan of seizing Constantinople and the Straits. Such deliberations do not indicate a pacific frame of mind. Colonel House, the friend of President Wilson, wrote in May 1914 from his European tour: 'Whenever England consents, France and Russia will close in on Germany and Austria.' A prophetic utterance! though it did not contain the whole truth.

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To study in full detail the diplomatic manœuvres during the July crisis of 1914 lies outside the scope of this book. Yet the relevant facts must be recorded. The question of responsibility has become such an important topic, indeed a political weapon, that it is not possible to treat the subject in too sketchy a manner. Besides, the July crisis shows up all the weaknesses and danger points of the general situation ; this alone justifies a closer inquiry.

On the other hand, the historical significance of this diplomatic episode must not be over-estimated. It was a contest between diplomats ; the doors of the council chambers were closed—the nations remained outside. The political ideas which governed the diplomatic intercourse, such as balance of power, spheres of interest, national prestige, sovereignty, provided a poor guidance through the fog of distrust. The lights had gone out over Europe long before the conflict arose.

The crisis began with the murder of Archduke Francis Ferdinand on June the 28th and led to the outbreak of war on August the 1st. The Serajevo murder and its political background—Serbian nationalism—was certainly a fierce challenge that had to be taken up. It was justified that the full extent of the conspiracy should be brought to light and the guilty punished, participators and condoners alike. The crime was a most suitable case for international arbitration but this way of settlement (though it was suggested at a later stage of the crisis by the Tsar) seemed then impracticable. A sovereign state was considered the sole guardian of its own vital interests. So Austria embarked upon her punitive policy which she conveniently combined with wider aims. 'Now is the time to stamp upon the rabble,' wrote Wilhelm II, echoing the intentions of his ally. It was this cunning combination of perfectly legitimate and urgent demands with power politics that weakened Austria's case and gave the trend of affairs its fateful direction.

By far the most serious political move during that critical period was the Kaiser's and Bethmann Hollweg's readiness to give Austria a free hand in dealing with Serbia. This assurance was given to Count Hoyos, the emissary of Francis Joseph on July the 5th. Without Germany's unconditional support Graf Berchthold would not have been able to frame and carry out his intransigent policy, for he had to overcome opposition inside his own government.

It has always been firmly stated on the German side that the ultimatum was entirely Austria's work. This is presumably not quite true. According to Dr. W. Muehlon's account (based on information received from Dr. Helfferich) the substantial contents of the ultimatum were decided upon in Berlin on July the 5th when Hoyos saw the Kaiser and Bethmann Hollweg. The free hand which Germany gave to Austria was

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therefore in actual fact a joint plan of procedure. Considering the common risks this seems only natural. But the German Government thought it expedient (having given its general approval) to create the impression that Austria's action was based entirely on her own decisions. This trick (for such it was) hardly affects the question of responsibility. Had Germany given her unconditional support blindfolded she would have chosen only a particularly unintelligent way of identifying herself with Austria's policy.

When the ultimatum had been delivered and (except for a few though important provisos) accepted, Wilhelm II and his Chancellor changed their attitude. 'A brilliant achievement,' wrote the Kaiser, 'it removes all reason for war.' And further on: 'The reservations made on a few points of detail can in my view be cleared up by negotiation.' The responsible men in Vienna did not share the Kaiser's view. They were determined to go ahead, having taken into account, right from the beginning, the possibility of Russia's interference. Between July the 25th (Serbia's answer) and July the 28th (Austria's declaration of war) the issue was in the balance. This short but hopeful phase of pitiful three days was practically reduced to twenty-four hours because Austria kept the Serbian answer secret for nearly two days. But why did Germany not insist upon immediate information without an hour's delay? Even so, the hopeful phase could have been indefinitely prolonged, had the German Government acted at once upon its own conclusions. Bethmann Hollweg did not repeat officially in unmistakable words what the Kaiser had said in private: There is no longer any reason for war. That would have provided immediately a strong basis for further peace efforts. Austria, of course, would have resented it as a sign of inconsistency. And against this reproach, we may surmise, Bethmann Hollweg wanted to guard himself.

Grey's proposal for a conference in London was turned down on July the 28th. It should have been eagerly welcomed. For if there were going to be negotiations what better practical suggestion to open them could have been made? It was folly (if not insincerity) to maintain that direct talks between Austria and Russia would at that stage yield better results! What Germany failed to do, England might have done. Why was Vienna only approached via Berlin? Direct representations might have had a salubrious effect even on Graf Berchthold's set mind. Grey himself, in later years, reproached himself for not having taken that step. On the same day when Grey's proposals were rejected, Austria declared war on Serbia.

It was not until then that Berlin decided to stay Austria's hand. Bethmann Hollweg wrote on July the 30th: 'We are indeed ready to ful-

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fil our duty as allies but we must decline to be dragged into a world conflagration by Vienna wantonly and in neglect of our advice.' Reasonable words, but they were of no avail. Why not? Because the German Commander-in-Chief took it upon himself to counteract (on the same day) the urgent request of the Chancellor. He advised Vienna to reject proposals for mediation,¹ and urgently recommended general mobilization, promising that Germany would also mobilize. 'If Austria-Hungary is to survive the European war must be carried through. Germany will unconditionally help.' This assurance was given at the same time when Bethmann Hollweg laboured hard to make it clear that unconditional support should not be expected. It is important to note that Moltke's telegram was sent before the news of Russia's mobilization had reached Berlin. The general's step was from the purely constitutional point of view monstrous; it was not his business to interfere in such matters. Yet usage and actual power are often of greater importance than the written law. Graf Berchthold rightly remarked: 'Who, then, is the real ruler in Berlin, Bethmann or Moltke?'

Moltke's attitude need not surprise, it was quite consistent. He only applied his conviction that an early clash with Russia was desirable to the conditions of the present crisis: He believed that Russia was not yet prepared for war, but in 1917 she might be ready. After the war Grey said in the House of Lords: 'In 1914 Europe arrived at a point in which every country except Germany was afraid of the present, and Germany was afraid of the future.' This statement sums up the outlook of the German High Command, Moltke and his associates who overruled the government and frustrated its belated efforts to prevent a European war.²

The July crisis can be divided up into three phases. The first one, from June the 28th to July the 25th, when Austria could do what she thought fit, relying on Germany's unconditional support. The second, from July the 25th to July the 28th, when the German Government against its better knowledge still championed Austria's policy. The third, from July the 28th to August the 1st, when war had broken out and the task

¹ This refers to the Grey-Lichnovsky formula. The interference of the German High Command frustrated the diplomatic chances of this last English attempt. The Russian mobilization worked in the same direction and brought diplomatic activity to an end.

² Moltke's political activities are also reflected in a report written by General Wenninger, head of the Bavarian Army, on July the 29th: 'The Chief of Staff . . . is employing all his influence to secure that the present favourable opportunity for a decisive blow shall not be lost. He points out that France's military position is at present very difficult, that Russia's is far from strong and that she is aware of it, moreover, that the time of the year is favourable; most of the harvest has been gathered and the training of the year's recruits completed.'

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was not to preserve peace but to restore it. During this third phase the efforts of the statesmen were severely hampered by the growing influence of military men. The war offices began to overshadow the chancelleries.

To use diplomatic pressure in order to force an intransigent government to give in, is one thing. To use diplomatic pressure in order to forestall or even to cancel mobilization is quite another affair and a much stiffer proposition. The first appeal is directed to the statesmen, the second one, in actual fact though not formally, to the military advisers who can play the trump card of 'military necessity' and seldom fail to do so. This has to be borne in mind when we examine the turmoil of the third and last phase.

On July the 29th the German ambassador Pourtalès categorically informed the Russian Foreign Minister that Germany would have to mobilize and an attack would follow immediately if Russia continued her military preparations even without mobilizing. The Russian order for mobilization was extracted from the reluctant Tsar in the late afternoon of July the 30th. On the same day, early in the afternoon, a strange incident occurred in Germany: the *Berliner Lokalanzeiger*, then a semi-official paper, published the news of Germany's general mobilization and cancelled it a few hours later as an 'error'. What an error at such a time!

It is not justified to attribute pivotal importance to the Russian mobilization the news of which reached the European capitals not before the early morning of July the 31st, at a time, therefore, when the crisis had fully entered its third almost unmanageable phase. It is possible, perhaps even likely, that increased English pressure on Russia might have postponed the order of mobilization. In St. Petersburg England's attitude was watched with intense interest and, on the whole, with confident satisfaction. There was presumably more readiness to listen and to yield than Sir Edward Grey and particularly his two advisers Sir Arthur Nicholson and Sir Eyre Crowe were prepared to expect. During the Liman Sanders crisis Russia's policy had been salubriously affected by the fact that support from England could not be counted upon. On the other hand it can be argued that a government will only run the risk of disregarding the urgent demands of its military experts if pressure from abroad be linked up with a promise of assistance should things go wrong. Such a promise England was anxious to avoid. The question is controversial; different opinions are possible. It is therefore wrong to state categorically that England's pressure on Russia would have been a perfectly simple policy and, above all, *the* solution. The proposed policy was not simple at all but highly intricate and can by no means be compared with Bethmann Hollweg's belated attempts to restrain Austria.

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Germany was then abandoning a plan of action which she had generally approved of three weeks ago; England was not Russia's senior partner in a common enterprise. Her advice, at this moment, affecting Russia's security had to be a pledge. Whereas Germany tried to extricate herself, England, by the same policy, would have risked commitments. Furthermore, even if England had successfully attempted to postpone Russia's general mobilization, would this have affected Moltke, Berchthold, and Conrad von Hoetzendorff? They had made up their minds that there was going to be war. The controversy boils down to the question: Who was the ruler in Berlin? Moltke or Bethmann? The answer is obvious.

On July the 31st 'drohende Kriegsgefahr' was proclaimed in Germany. An ultimatum was sent to Russia and a very strange inquiry to France. The French Government was asked, in case it declared its neutrality in the German-Russian conflict, to surrender Toul and Verdun as a pledge. Who within his wits can have believed that such demands would be granted? The Prussian generals, we cannot fail to notice, had begun to speak. They were going on to do so, most confidently, for the next four years. If things had gone well for Germany their voice would have been heard at the conference table, and Brest Litovsk gives us a rough idea what the Prussian peace would have been like. But in 1918 the game of the generals was up; they hastily withdrew leaving it to others to bear the unpleasant consequences of defeat. On August the 1st Germany started the war on two fronts according to the Schlieffen plan. The troops moved towards Belgium.

What remains to be told is the story of the Kaiser's fall. After the March offensive (1918) had failed, defeat was approaching. On August the 14th a Council of State was summoned to discuss the situation. The Kaiser, in one of his better moments, drew the right conclusion, whereas his advisers, the High Command, the Chancellor, and the Secretaries of State did not dare to do so. This was the conclusion: the war cannot be won and has to be brought to an end through negotiations which must be opened immediately. But no action was taken. The weeks after August the 14th find their parallel in the second phase of the July crisis—procrastination and indecision in spite of better knowledge. The gods do not always strike with blindness those whom they want to destroy; they sometimes give understanding and paralyse the will. It is not surprising that the German Government, Graf Hertling and his colleagues did not show initiative. They were used to standing, their heads bowed, in the anteroom of the High Command. Prince Max von Baden was the first Chancellor who dared to ask Hindenburg questions. The fatal delay led to Germany's capitulation which was insisted upon by the German High Command as the only way out.

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The November Revolution swept away the Kaiser's régime. Prussia abandoned her king. Hindenburg advised his royal master to seek refuge in Holland; he had first to clear his throat but that was about all. An important fact to note is the weakness of the revolutionary forces that were nevertheless strong enough to overthrow Wilhelm II. The most dangerous enemy of the Kaiser at that critical moment was not the Revolution itself represented by soviets set up in German towns but the apathy of the war-weary masses that were taking no part in events either way. No attempts were made by Wilhelm II to rally his supporters, Words of appeal that used to flow so freely from his lips failed him in the hour of need. He was no fighter. He confined himself to his military headquarters; he should have been in the capital. The only effort he made to save his throne was the pathetic suggestion to abdicate as Emperor whilst remaining King of Prussia. The fact that his abdication was proclaimed in Berlin (rather under the pressure of fear) before the Kaiser had given his final consent is of little practical importance. Monarchists (and the exiled Kaiser himself) have tried to make the most of it. What a quibble! Wilhelm lost his throne because his paladins, the chiefs of the army had dropped him like a broken tool, not because Herr Scheidemann shouted a few words from a balcony.

The fall of the monarchy must be considered a turning point in German history though it was hardly looked upon like that when the event took place. For monarchy is, in Germany (and in other European countries as well), a safeguard against revolutionary disruption and civil strife. There is no other national tradition (certainly not the army, that stronghold of mischief makers) that could exercise this pacifying influence which is necessary in order to keep public life sound and sane. We are reminded of the situation after and during the religious wars. The monarchies of Europe consolidated their position as a power above the religious dissensions. The schism and its consequences made it inevitable to secularize the state in the interest of peace but also of religion. Persecution contaminates the faith. There is a lesson to be learnt. A nation torn asunder by bitter and irreconcilable antagonisms needs repose. Health must restore itself, it cannot be given like a present. Free elections, under such conditions, cannot be expected to produce positive results on which a stable political life could be based. They can only bring to light and, indeed, accentuate the bitter diversity of opinion. Agitation rules supreme. What is needed, however, are conditions that make people inclined to live together not to go for each other's throats.

It may be difficult to recapture the pacifying power of monarchy once the tradition has been broken. Monarchy restored is never the same thing again. The historical fact, however, cannot be denied that monarchy has

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been able to pacify and to reconcile. It is therefore not surprising that the fall of the monarchy in Germany should have inaugurated a period of political unrest and revolutionary fermentation. The king who went overboard deserved his fate; the breakdown of the institution, however, left a dangerous gap. The fall of the German princes who shared the Emperor's misfortune has a further significance. They represented traditions older than the Reich. Their disappearance paved the way for a policy, already in full swing under the Weimar Republic, to reduce regional independence and decentralization to the very minimum. The actual fulfilment of these aspirations was Hitler's odious 'Gleichschaltung'. Under his rule the Reich established itself like an octopus. No life was to be left (that was the intention) outside this all-devouring organism.

The general character of this period has already been described in the preceding chapter. The great men of the nineteenth century stood in strong opposition to the spirit that found its boisterous manifestation under the Kaiser. This whole period is *passé*. Its vulgar materialism and hollow pomp have no message to give. It is a most interesting fact, however, that there is a connection between the period of Imperialism and the reign of National Socialism, not only in the political sphere. Kaiser Wilhelm was a great admirer of Houston Stewart Chamberlain and, I suppose, vice versa. They wrote each other long letters, fan mail in fact, all about the Aryan, about the struggle against Rome and Juda, and similar topics. Chamberlain also wrote a letter to Hitler. He welcomed him as the liberator of Germany, adding some rather abstruse stuff about Goethe which the 'Führer' cannot have appreciated. Chamberlain's *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* have contributed a great deal to National Socialist phraseology. The herald of the Nordic man stands, as a comforter, between the Kaiser and Adolf Hitler, holding their hands.

It may be pointed out, however, that Hitler was a severe critic not only of the Kaiser's régime but of the whole period. This, certainly, is true. Hitler condemned the era of Wilhelm II but he condemned it for the wrong reasons.

All his arguments of political expediency do not concern us here. They are irrelevant. His main and important criticism is: nationalism before the Great War was too tepid, not fanatical enough, therefore his own task was to intensify it, to give it the maniacal touch which it seemed to be lacking. Well has he fulfilled this mission! Taking a broader and more detached view of the whole development from 1890 onwards, we cannot fail to realize that the 'Führer' himself was a rather typical product of the pre-war period. He was a man without any guidance, emptied and

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broken, only to be lifted up from the depths of his misery and insignificance by the frenzy of a perverted militaristic patriotism. It is interesting to read how he describes his reactions when war had been declared: 'The war of 1914 was certainly not forced on the masses, it was even desired by the whole people. For me these hours came as a deliverance from the distress that had weighed upon me during the days of my youth. I am not ashamed to acknowledge to-day that I was carried away by the enthusiasm of the moment and that I sank down upon my knees and thanked Heaven out of the fullness of my heart for the favour of having been permitted to live in such a time.' The sight of Hitler on his knees praying to the demon of war may be slightly embarrassing but it is also revealing. The 'Führer', it seems, did not show enough gratitude towards the surroundings and influences that had moulded his ideas. He was, indeed, the Kaiser's true recruit.

It is therefore perhaps not surprising that some of Wilhelm's sons should have joined the National Socialists. At that critical hour they did not show the reserve and dignity of Prince Ruprecht of Bavaria and Berthold of Baden, who refused to come to terms with the disreputable movement. Honour to Frederick the Great who abolished torture in Prussia! But shame on the Hohenzollern princes who became the followers of the man who reintroduced it!

IX

'CONSERVATIVE REVOLUTION' AND NIHILISM

The political, social, and economic developments of the last century have deprived many people in all nations of their true citizenship; they have become, to use Professor Toynbee's term, members of the 'internal proletariat'. They are homeless though they may have a roof over their heads. 'The true hall-mark of the proletarian,' Toynbee writes,¹ 'is neither poverty nor humble birth but a consciousness—and the resentment which this consciousness inspires—of being disinherited from his ancestral place in society and being unwanted in a community which is his rightful home, and this subjective proletarianism is not incompatible with the possession of material assets.' This, I think, is an excellent definition. The industrial revolution which so gravely disturbed the healthy equilibrium between town and country has drastically transformed the character of European nations. The great technical improvements, the stupendous increase of productive power, the advance of science, particularly of medicine, impressed men so much that the harmful effects of the industrial system were at first overlooked or belittled. Everything will be right in the end, so people believed, if only the conditions of the working classes can be sufficiently improved to pacify this sphere of unrest, or, better still, to turn it into a paradise. Was not the crux of the matter, after all, a question of wages and, in addition to this, a problem of adequate State support which must be secured in order to fill the gaps? This convenient simplification of the industrial problem cannot be accepted. It is almost an equivalent to the old liberal dogma which maintained that the constitutional system will cure all political ailments and make nations free and happy. Socialists and semi-Socialists would like us to believe that all social and political evils will disappear if a society be constructed which gives everybody his daily bread. The Liberals of the nineteenth century and the Socialists of the twentieth century have this in common: they consider their proposition a shibboleth. Those who venture to criticize the proposed social scheme (because of its far-reaching implications) are often glibly labelled as callous egoists who do not care about the misery of their fellow-men or as benighted people incapable of understanding

¹ *A Study of History*, vol. v, p. 63.

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the most plausible and self-evident suggestions. It has to be accepted as a fact, which cannot be altered at present, that every problem which the political agitator has seized and almost monopolized, can only be discussed under rather abnormal and unpleasant conditions.

The miseries of the 'Internal Proletariat' are of a deeper nature than the Socialists are ready to admit. The range of problems has widened. The era of industrial expansion has not only brought misery upon whole classes of men, it has also, through the application of ruthless methods, ruined the soil. The outlook of industrialized societies is so decidedly urban that it took some time before the grave problems of modern agriculture came in sight. To-day they have emerged and demand the full attention of the thoughtful. It may well be, that agricultural reforms will start a healing process of restoration, the scope of which cannot yet be estimated. The careful and competent tillage of the soil, the combat against erosion, the building up and preservation of fertility, are tasks which demand a modern Benedictine spirit; they call (so many knowledgeable people believe) for the small owner, not for huge collective organizations. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to expect far-reaching effects once the general attitude has changed and the problems of the soil receive proper attention.

For the time being, however, the narrower problems of the Internal Proletariat are more urgent and acute. This ever-growing class has become representative of modern society. All industrialized states harbour masses of men who have been 'disinherited' and are practically out of touch with the traditions of our civilization. The danger exists therefore everywhere that grave revolutionary changes advancing behind a smoke-screen of plausibility may gain the support of the uprooted, and with this support almost anything can be attempted. In Germany this attempt was made and with great success. The National Socialist Revolution contains elements which are typically German; in Chapter III the Prussian contribution which is of decisive importance, has been discussed. But the basic character of the upheaval is not national but social and even spiritual; as such it is European and universal. The Hitler movement can be called a stampede of suburbia, and to understand its historical significance as well as its temporary success it is best to approach the whole affair from the point of view of the common man. A careful analysis of his position will provide the clue to the problem.

The common man in post-war Germany was above all a citizen of a Capitalist society. Let us leave the more conspicuous and shocking aspects aside: pauperism and degradation, slums and under-nourishment. Consider the case of an individual who was lucky enough to escape penury but who was still in the grips of the system—a victim in the sense

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that he was not one of the very few masters. The insecurity of life which lay behind the deceptive façade of scanty bourgeois comfort created the undercurrent of anxiety so typical of any Capitalist society. This anxiety was always present though often hidden and dormant. It was the fear of a man who is up against impersonal, anonymous forces which are quite outside his control and carry him along. At any moment, however, these forces might become adverse and drop him like a broken useless tool. This hidden fear is presumably the main weakness of the Capitalist structure and reveals its instability. In times of crisis when Capitalism gets out of gear, when unemployment spreads, anxiety develops into open alarm. The conditions in post-war Germany, the economic distress linked up with inflation and the political results of defeat, brought about this sombre change of mentality. But the crisis only intensified the situation that had existed before in times of prosperity; it did not create an entirely new one. The element of fear which began to affect the body politic like a virulent germ was not the result of the war and the disorder which followed, it was an element inherent in the social and economic order and likely to grow.

Was there no antidote against this hidden fear, no source of encouragement that could have sustained the common man? Could not democracy, which apparently had been fully established in Germany since 1919, provide the remedy? Was it not possible that the pride and self-reliance of the citizen might outweigh the feeling of frustration which the same man experienced as an employee? The answer must be: democracy failed to achieve this. On the contrary, political freedom, the fully developed democratic rights, did not reduce the feeling of frustration, they accentuated it. The towering edifice of modern democracy has a bewildering effect on the individual citizen. He is told that he is not a subject who must obey but an independent man who shares responsibility, because he votes. One might well ask whether a state of affairs where the participation in government is reduced to the right of casting a vote now and then can rightly be called democracy.

Rousseau, the father of modern democracy, would certainly have answered in the negative for he considered any representative body incompatible with truly democratic principles. But the liberal propaganda of the nineteenth century was not affected, as we have seen, by the scruples of the early theorist. The belief in the ballot box and in the miracles which it would work was for a long time unshaken. This optimism no longer existed in the twentieth century. It is certain that the common man, if he considered his position with a sober mind, could not fail to see that his own personal contribution to the management and direction of political affairs was minute. The suspicion grew that modern

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democracy with its paraphernalia of elections, parliament, free press and other civic liberties, had developed into some kind of mock show and that the actual political game had become a very secret business directed behind the scenes by bankers and industrialists. The sincerity of the democratic system was doubted and this scepticism was shared even by those who were not influenced by the doctrines of socialism and its critical interpretation of the modern Capitalist state. The doubts were vague but they were present everywhere. The man who accepted these suspicions and believed them to be more or less true would not only feel insecure and insignificant, he would suspect that he had been tricked and deceived. As a democratic citizen the common man experienced again the same sense of frustration ; he was up against strong impersonal forces which determined his fate.

In times of political calm when the destiny of the nation seemed to be in safe keeping the average man need not be unduly worried about his political insignificance. Under such conditions Germans have always been very much inclined to follow Voltaire's advice and to ‘cultivate their own gardens’, very much to the annoyance of political agitators. In times of crisis, however, when danger is threatening, the feeling of frustration reaches an acute and intense stage. ‘What will happen? What can we do (except criticize freely and buy as many different newspapers as we like)? Have we any say at all in the matter?’ All this breeds bewilderment and perplexity, it might even breed despair. It is certainly strange that democracy, which set out to give the citizen new vigour and strength by making him the guardian of the common cause, should have ever reached a stage where, in spite of all civic liberties freely granted, the energies of men were thwarted because they were offered no real chance, no real responsibility. In the Weimar Republic the great old words of democracy meant little, they seemed out of keeping with actual facts (and they were). Democracy transmitted no new energies ; it rather intensified the anxious perplexity which the Capitalist system produced in its victims. When, after the Reichstag fire, the National Socialists destroyed the machinery and institutions of Democracy (the German parliament had obediently voted itself out of existence) there was little regret and alarm. The Germans failed to realize the protective value of their democratic institutions. The real danger of Hitlerism, however, was not its anti-democratic programme but its defiance of the human conscience. To take a critical view of Democracy is not a sin against mankind. But the men to whom absolute power was given had already revealed their true character, their brutality and their contempt of justice. How was it possible to overlook these sinister signs? How could a Saviour be accepted who was foaming at the mouth?

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The decisive problem at that critical stage was, undoubtedly, the religious situation, though most people would have denied its urgency and importance; they were absorbed in topical issues, which so rarely reveal essentials. Potentially, the Christian religion, the faith that has moulded our civilization, can certainly overcome even harder difficulties than those which confronted the German nation after the war. But German Christianity was enfeebled; the section of the population out of touch with living religious tradition (worthy of that name) had become too large. This, however, was not peculiar to Germany. It is a common feature of all industrialized societies. Secularism holds the floor and is, on the whole, so sure of itself that it takes its own vague views for granted. The modern secularists, contrary to their predecessors in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, consider it hardly worth while to think out properly their own beliefs. The pronouncements on religion and similar topics made in the newspapers by well-known authors and sometimes even by celebrities, are astounding documents. Such stuff would not have passed in Voltaire's time. The French encyclopaedists and also the agnostics of the Victorian age discussed religious problems on a much higher level; they really argued. There was also more honesty. Having discarded the foundations of religious belief as illusions, they thought it no longer proper to cherish the sentiments which faith instils. They deplored and fought what they considered false and fictitious, readily sacrificing the pleasant by-products of error. To put it briefly—the secularists of the past cared more for truth. Anyway, it is correct to say that religion had practically lost its influence and that modern secularism was but a poor and lamentable substitute. It only added another weariness to the general drabness of suburban life.

The problem was: how can the frustration of the common man be overcome? It is not surprising that this very serious problem should have assumed, in the mind of the political agitator, the very different form: how can frustration be exploited? All grievances contain revolutionary possibilities. Communism set out to seize this opportunity. Its success was considerable; in the eyes of many, alarming. What was its line of approach? The Communist manual of political propaganda had been worked out by Karl Marx and was based on his economic theory and analysis. Marx broke down the deadly isolation of the helpless individual. He could not conjure away insecurity but he made it bearable by enlisting men in the army of the coming revolution. People were made 'class-conscious', to use the Marxist term. Note the military character of this successful rally. The cadres of civil war were being organized, there was a campaign ahead, the conquest of the earth was at hand and after bitter fighting the working man would live in peace and enjoy the

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fruits of his labour. Messages of such stirring quality overcome frustration, they point towards a goal, they focus energies. To become a Socialist meant originally to enlist as a soldier of the revolution.

The fortress of Capitalism, however, proved to be stronger than the militant Socialists had expected it to be. The German Social-Democrats developed into a party that had practically given up the early revolutionary hopes though the old slogans were not all discarded. Even inside this party, which had settled down in the Capitalist world with a certain contentment, the revolutionary aspirations lingered on, but feebly, like a bodiless ghost. The heated controversy whether these men, the Social-Democrats, were still true disciples of Karl Marx, does not concern us here. Socialism must lose its attraction as a revolutionary force as soon as a compromise is made with the Capitalist order. As a respectable parliamentary party reducing its functions to beneficial reforms, it becomes a part of the present political system and can no longer be regarded as an enemy of the existing order. Comfortably roped in, it will not escape the suspicions which modern democracy and its machinery arouse. In 1918 the Social Democrats had come to power when the régime of the Kaiser had broken down. Their leaders, notably Friedrich Ebert, bravely shouldered their responsibility; they struggled hard but they were unable to kindle a single spark of hope and inspiration. It was a different story with the Communists. They fully adopted the policy which Marx had recommended, hence their success in the disintegrating Capitalist society of post-war Germany. There were, of course, many people in Germany, not only among the wealthy, who from the bottom of their hearts disliked this political creed and the flavour of its propaganda. The middle classes, though they were drifting more and more into the 'internal proletariat', were not attracted by Communism. They feared it.

National Socialism entered the political arena at a rather late stage. The propaganda methods of Communism had been by then well established. The National Socialists copied them. Communist theory had grown into that vast literature which only the learned can master and which has less influence on Communist politics than the neophyte who broods over the works of Karl Marx and Lenin would like to realize. The National Socialists had no doctrine to offer that could be seriously discussed; they came, so to speak, empty-handed. How then, could they set to work at all? The answer is: revolutionary propaganda can get on well without any systematic doctrine. Rousseau's Social Contract was put on a table in the French National Assembly somewhat as the Bible in court, but the street orators who swayed the crowds were not expounding political philosophy. The success of the demagogue depends upon

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the exploitation of fears and hopes; to look upon him as a teacher and lecturer is a wrong and very academic approach. It was to Hitler's advantage that he had no real political programme; this widened the range of his appeal. National Socialist oratory and verbiage revealed the desire of the speakers to pose as defenders and restorers. Family life, political integrity, patriotism, sense of honour, the dignity of manual labour, small ownership, 'positive Christianity'—such were the slogans that were dished out, together with blood-curdling threats against the Jews and the 'Weimar System'. Surely, a strange mixture! But it is exactly this mixture that makes National Socialism an interesting and instructive problem.

With this movement there arose for the first time in German history the hybrid breed of a conservative revolution. Conservative aims can of course never be achieved through revolutionary methods. Therefore, a truly conservative revolution is an impossibility. It is senseless to plan and carry out a revolution in order to preserve and to restore. The enterprise in itself is absurd. The movements in history which are usually called counter-revolutions are either military undertakings or epilogues of violence following the breakdown of a revolutionary government. But in all these cases the observer will be struck by the complete lack of restorative power. The 'Conservative Revolution' is, however, not the same thing as a counter-revolution. It claims to be an original, valid conception. National Socialism, thoroughly revolutionary in its methods, is revolutionary in its effects and also, as far as Hitler himself is concerned, in its aims. To quote a passage from Dr. Rauschning's book: Hitler speaks: 'Providence has ordained that I should be the greatest liberator of humanity. I am freeing men from the restraints of an intelligence that has taken charge; from the dirty and degrading self-mortifications of a chimera called conscience and morality and from the demands of a freedom and personal independence which only a very few can bear.' Thus spake Nietzsche's clown! Note the cold and smirking contempt for the average man and his standards, his dignity and his freedom. This piece of spoken journalese makes it quite clear that Hitler did not look upon himself as a restorer. But he wanted others (though presumably not his intimate friends and not all of his followers) to consider his movement as a conservative revolution. He would have certainly liked the occupied countries of Europe to believe something of the kind and his propaganda worked along these lines. He thought it would pay. And why? Because a certain response can be expected to any scheme of revolutionary restoration. The 'hybrid breed' is not Hitler's production. The idea had been advocated by Moeller van den Bruck and others; it was widespread, and can be interpreted as

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a wild cry for restoration in times of collapse. It is a most dangerous illusion.

The French Revolution challenged a world that was still sufficiently sure of itself and rose in defence. Since then, the industrial revolution had unhinged the social structure of the European nations. Germany was, on the whole, not more affected than other countries. But the defeat in 1918 and its consequences put German society under a special pressure. Nobody had fully realized in times of power and prosperity the true state of affairs which was then revealed. The experience was alarming. When the sudden crisis set in, a great majority of the people felt that there was nothing to fall back upon. The true calamity was the lack of spiritual reserves. Inflation, unemployment, economic distress—such were the circumstances. The German response was National Socialism. The nature of this response can, of course, not be explained by economic and social circumstances. If moral disorder were the outcome of economic distress then the rich would be better men than the poor. The peculiar intensity of the modern social problem is due to the fact that penury is imposed upon men who according to Toynbee's definition have been disinherited. The masses that flocked round Hitler were not the very poor but rather the endangered middle classes, stricken by fear of poverty which is the most bitter Bourgeois anxiety. Their so-called general education turned out to be worth nothing; they knew Goethe, Schiller, and what not, but they followed hurriedly a preacher of revenge who promised to win them back their own by hook or by crook.

It is an interesting fact that it has been possible to take full measure of National Socialism and to repudiate it from the purely theological point of view dispensing with all methods of historical analysis. This was achieved in the Papal encyclical 'Mit brennender Sorge' (1937), a document of truly pastoral solicitude. 'Before all else, venerable brothers,' writes the Pope, 'see that belief in God, the first and irreplaceable foundation of all religion, remains pure and uncorrupted in German lands.' This is not the language we are used to hear from other physicians attempting a diagnosis of our time. Suburbia, in its self-complacency, is not prepared to listen to such pronouncements. Nor would it accept the following statement: 'To encourage the abandonment of the eternal principles of the objective moral law in the formation of consciences . . . is a sin against the future of a people, and its bitter fruit will have to be tasted by future generations.' These words might have been addressed to all self-confident promoters of enlightenment who, in the seclusion of their studies, had been trying to remove the fetters of the past.

In 1884 Nietzsche had written: 'Oh my brethren, is not everything adrift? Have not all railings and bridges fallen into the water? Woe to

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us, hail to us, thaw has come!' Who would be naïve enough to believe that the great melting away is only typical of the German climate? The sense of drift which the solitary philosopher foresaw and welcomed in his visionary dreams was, as a real experience, not enjoyed by the masses. The reaction of the average man was not so heroic as Nietzsche may have expected. When the flood came, the bewildered citizens did not rush forward into nihilism with shouts of delight; they, on the contrary, wanted the old, stable, and normal society (then a fairy tale) to come back again: family life, work, daily bread, and a reasonable amount of independence. Such aims were no longer a matter of defence, they had become a matter of reconquest. How easy to yield under such circumstances to the fallacy of a conservative revolution! It was like drinking vodka before joining, perhaps with many misgivings, the battalions of anarchy.

It would be wrong to blame the dupes too severely. The disinherited were not in a position to understand what national regeneration means. Rilke's verdict on post-war Germany sums up the situation: 'Germany was concerned only with salvation in a superficial, hasty, distrustful and grasping sense. . . . She wanted to persist and not to alter.' Take the case of Dr. Rauschnig. He is what might be called a conservative. He was driven into the revolutionary camp by the crisis of the time and his own rather muddled ideas. It took him years to realize the destructive character of the movement though he belonged to Hitler's intimate circle and was privileged to hear the obnoxious talk which he later put on record. The rank and file were wandering about in an even denser fog; they, certainly, had less chance than Rauschnig to learn what it was all about.

Prussia's reactions have been described in Chapter III. The Prussians welcomed the movement as soon as they believed that it would give them power. This attitude was typical of the army and of the 'Stahlhelm.' The ideal of the 'Stahlhelm' was, properly speaking, no ideal at all, it was a stagnant residue of Prussia's military traditions—a puddle. This semi-military organization, led by one Seldte, was the ante-room of the National Socialists. The tipsy patriotism which the 'Stahlhelm' loudly proclaimed was accepted by many Germans as a sacred national heritage that roused their deepest feelings. This explains why, during the critical period from January 1933 to Summer 1934, millions of Germans who for one reason or another were out of sympathy with the new régime nevertheless accepted it with hesitating, even bewildered approval. The well-known trumpets of Reich patriotism and militarism were sounding again, the citizens rallied hastily. Had not Hindenburg himself called the 'Young Chancellor of the people' (Volkskanzler) into office? Indeed he had, though he presumably failed to understand the implications of his

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decision. The field-marshal shook hands with the demagogue at the tomb of Frederick the Great, thus giving patriots a lead. The link between the past and the present could not have been more strongly emphasized. Nor is there any reason to maintain that the 'Day of Potsdam' was a mock show. The National Socialists did not illegitimately appropriate Prussia's symbols and emblems, they inherited them and they then proceeded to combine these traditions with their own ideas and contributions. They are heirs; they can hardly be called usurpers. To those, however, who have sufficient knowledge of early Prussia (1740-1840) the spectacle of National Socialism triumphant may assume a very different significance: the riot of servants who have plundered their master's wardrobe and are strutting about in stolen clothes. Anyway, the Stahlhelm patriots (depraved though they were) were deceived. They wanted to satisfy their emotions but they lost their lives in the service of a fraudulent political gambler.

The 'day of the dupes' is not the whole story of National Socialist ascendancy. It explains the success of the revolution, but it does not reveal its nature. Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and, even more so, his conversations with Rauschning are unmistakable signs that a bitter and spiteful resentment is the driving force behind this movement. Hitler's hatred is infernal. The active minority that made the Revolution, established the régime and committed the brutal crimes, was driven on by a congenial spirit. These explosive forces had grown within the framework of the existing order. How was this possible? What is the nature and origin of this Catiline spirit?

There is, to begin with, a great difference between the fringes and the centre of its magnetic field. Experience has shown that, on the whole, only young men were captured by this spirit; the aged desperadoes were exceptions. The whole affair is therefore fundamentally a problem of youth. The drabness and monotony of modern life breeds a sense of dissatisfaction and boredom that is in fact more dangerous than discontent which can formulate its grievances and make proper claims. A hungry man wants bread but the longings of those who are bored with life are less articulate. Boredom may well be called a disease of the mind, and a serious one. It weakens and eventually kills the power of appreciation. Life becomes a misery, although the two demands of the Atlantic Charter, freedom from want and freedom from fear may be completely secured. All this is but the beginning. Disillusionment must grow into something else before it can display dynamic qualities. It must sink into the depths of disgust where the will to destroy has its origin. Individuals can go through such abominable experiences at any place and at any time. The gates of Hell are open everywhere. But it needs rather special

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and extraordinary circumstances to drive an appreciable number of men into such spiritual adventures. The great war provided the opportunity.

It is impossible to over-estimate the influence of no-man's-land on the general outlook and imagination of the younger men. Historical research will never be able to reveal the profundity of this influence. Literature, poetry, and other written documents reflect it, but only dimly. Those who have been capable of some creative response to that experience are no longer the genuine representatives of that Nihilism which destruction has bred. They have been in touch with it, but they have escaped its grip. The true 'despisers of the Gods' do not care about the Muses either. Such men passed the nadir of disillusionment and entered the sphere where at the cost of man's soul new energies can be acquired. Hatred becomes the source of a new almost fiendish life. This is, of course, not a new, unheard of, ordeal; our forefathers who studied their Psalters knew it well. For there they read: 'Behold, he hath been in travail with injustice. He hath conceived sorrow and brought forth iniquity.' There is a sinister side to sadness. Saint Paul has called it 'tristitia seculi'. It is the fountainhead of evils, old and new.

And what is the innermost secret of this urge bent on destruction? It is the drift towards suicide. Hatred of life (often well disguised) has penetrated to the core and directs man's deepest impulse. As the Book of Revelation puts it in one of its grand and pregnant symbolical passages: 'A star, called Wormwood, fell upon the fountains of waters, and the third part of the waters became Wormwood, and many men died of the waters because they were made bitter.' An analysis of modernity might well choose these words as a motto: Spinoza wrote the majestic sentence: 'Whatsoever is, is in God, and without God nothing can be, or be conceived.' But was he right? From the pantheistic point of view the statement is a truism; but if interpreted in a theistic sense it is open to objections, in spite of its truth and grandeur. For is there no godforsaken life drifting towards emptiness and utter desolation? No modernist denies the reality of death but they all consider damnation a superstitious deception. Yet there are people who regard the one as being just as real as the other, not because some parsons have said so but because life suggests it.

The squads of Nihilism were indirectly supported by considerable numbers of young Germans who were equally keen on *tabula rasa* but for different and, indeed, more respectable reasons. They were in a state of intense almost mystical expectancy turning their backs on Western civilization and hoping for a new inspiration. Tibet and Russia (the Russia that Rilke admired) seemed to them more important than France, England, or America. Rome and Wittenberg they regarded as equally obsolete. The West, they thought, had no message to give; they did not

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need Spengler's pompous book to tell them that. Dostoevsky became their lord and master. One might compare this profound expectancy with the inarticulate heresy of the sixteenth century. There was the same groping for new sources of life, and the same lack of success. We are also reminded of Luther's controversy with Erasmus at the critical moment when the antinomian spirit seemed to be seizing its great opportunity. There is, however, one important difference. Though Dostoevsky's influence was at work, it cannot be said that humility was typical of the modern antinomian and anti-Western movement. On the contrary, the men who were trying to abandon the heritage of their forefathers were proud and sad spirits of an aristocratic brand, disciples of Nietzsche, in spite of their Eastern mysticism. Therefore it can be doubted whether they broke away at all, whether they did not carry with them, on their long pilgrimage, the unconquered disillusionment of the Western intelligentsia.

Hans Bächer has written an intricate but in many ways important book called *German Reality and its Course* (Von deutscher Wirklichkeit und ihrer Bahn). The author's deep sincerity and the complete lack of propaganda excitement make his work a most interesting document. There we find the plea to turn away from the West and its exhausted spiritual resources, a plea, mixed up (strangely enough) with the recommendation of Prussia. The Prussian bias was not typical of the post-war expectancy, yet, in spite of it, Bächer's book genuinely represents this widespread longing which has been deflected but not stifled by later political developments. Another book that introduces the reader to the company of these bold and adventurous navigators is Ernst Jünger's *The Undaunted Heart* (first edition—the second is less forceful). As a work of literature this book, I think, ranks high above Bächer's study; but it contains, in spite of its noblesse and vision, many sinister Nihilist elements. Destruction is contemplated with glee; cruelty is courted, and one wonders whether the conflagration that is consuming all values of the past will leave anything behind but ashes. The undaunted heart seems to be in love with death. Many of Jünger's aberrations can be attributed, I think, to the influence of J. K. Huysmans whom Jünger admired. Huysmans is downright evil, particularly when he turns pious.

It is true, the desire to overcome or rather to live down the encumbering heritage of the past has been translated into the crude Esperanto of power politics. The 'drive to the East' lost its mystical character. To procure 'lebensraum' meant digging the graves for others and snatching their goods. Germany will for some time to come be identified with such ruthless aspirations. But the original stir, unrelated to conquest and domination, must not be misinterpreted as deliberate deception—a smokescreen behind which tanks and guns were taking up their posi-

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tions. Yet there was a link between this adventurous spirituality and sheer force. If mysticism tries to explore and to conquer the dangerous realm beyond good and evil,¹ it often becomes the supporter and ally of immoral violence. There are many historical examples for such a co-operation. We must first travel to the foot of Mount Sinai before we can proceed to Mount Tabor.

The rejection of Europe was a grave proposal, but even as an idea it was beyond Hitler's comprehension. He and his henchmen would have laughed at it. The 'Führer' (because of his materialist outlook) was quite unfamiliar with the spiritual expectancy that was stirring among his own nation after the Great War. Rilke's 'Stundenbuch' has foreshadowed the spirit of these strange endeavours—there may be a new departure when the clamour of Hitlerite nationalism has died away. The piety which Rilke tries to express is (in spite of some allusions) far remote from the traditional conceptions of the West. His religious idiom is fascinating but certainly foreign. We hear a new song—*canticum novum*—but, and that should make us ponder, it is a song of fatigue.

A foreign observer may perhaps feel inclined to think that England, contrary to the nations on the Continent, has been spared so far the influx of the subtle Nihilist philosophy which (because of its ultimate urge) is unravelling the texture of our common tradition. The spirit of the Victorian age rather accentuated England's insularity and did not fully correspond to the mentality abroad. The outlook of the English bourgeoisie and of the working classes as well was far more traditional. There was a solid amount of self-confidence which provided an effective protection against the spiritual radicalism which, at that time, found so many brilliant spokesmen in European countries. To-day, however, the old line of defence seems to be no longer properly manned. There have been breaches. Isolated symptoms indicating that some dissolvent is at work can be noticed. Mr. Sacheverell Sitwell's remarkable book *Splendours and Miseries* belongs to the same category as the writings of Jünger and his associates; it is a flirtation with the devil from cover to cover. Compared with this author, other English modernists seem to be far less advanced. They challenge one thing or the other in the name of social justice or progress but have not really abandoned the fundamental standards. On the contrary, they confidently interpret foreign movements like Communism in their own accustomed, liberal way, assuming an agreement on principles that does not really exist. There is no courting of evil. 'We believe in Hell, but do not believe in Heaven,' Mr. Sitwell candidly remarks.

A hundred years ago Schopenhauer had said practically the same. His

¹ In actual fact, the realm does not exist. It is an illusion of the proud. On closer examination it turns out to be a dependency of evil.

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pessimism has been a most virulent element in the process of modern fermentation. His philosophy interprets *tristitia seculi* as the ultimate truth and the way of life, leading (quite appropriately) to extinction. Schopenhauer's power of presentation was exceptional. 'One day he will surpass us all,' Goethe rightly remarked to some friends, at a time when Schopenhauer was an unknown, rather querulous young man. But could there be a more dangerous philosophical aberration? We have come to abandon the liberal idea that it matters little what we think about the universe. Nothing matters more. The remark which Tertullian made in his important book against Marcion could also have been addressed to Schopenhauer: 'How hard is this obstinacy of yours! You vilify the things in which you both live and die.' The practical consequences of such vilification, of such impiety, are bitter though they need time to mature. The grave issue does not allow itself to be confined for ever to books and discussions. Schopenhauer thought presumably that he was leading Europe gently towards Buddhism. What an illusion! The pessimists, with sorry faces, are always unlocking the gates of Hell. Evil, so clearly recognized by them (for they have taken off the rosy spectacles of the idealists) gets a special chance. At the end of the nineteenth century the educated bourgeois responded keenly to Schopenhauer's sombre visions; their sons followed Nietzsche; their grandsons took to dynamite which they considered the real thing. They were no longer interested in shattering ideas. Scepticism had destroyed itself and produced, as its last exhalation, the *fata morgana* of a new authoritative world.

The towering prison of the Totalitarian State is built upon the rubble of the bourgeois age, upon modern doubt unconquered. The new certainties and dogmas are fictitious, established by decree of will. The secular authority that in many countries has risen to heights which former generations would have considered fantastic, is the outcome of disillusionment, not the answer to it. Doubt has muzzled its own voice. That is the situation which confronts us to-day—a mighty consummation of modernity. Hell is a reality, Heaven a chimera. Ask a simple and unsophisticated man what he thinks of that and whether he feels inclined to accept the new religion. His instinct will tell him that his own well-being, his joys and his freedom would be threatened by the ascendancy of disillusioned supermen who consider this world the devil's cavern. Belief in Hell and disbelief in Heaven (a creed that could, of course, be stated in different, less theological terms) is, indeed, the core of the widespread and obnoxious affair which has been called, for want of a better name, Nihilism.¹

¹ A better name would certainly be desirable. For Nihilism is not just nothing; it is full of dynamic life, it is a forceful enterprise of deliberate transgression—impiety sure of itself.

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The Nihilist mentality, we may conclude, was the product of modernity; war experience gave it dynamic force. Its influence upon the political development of post-war Germany was decisive. The revolutionary disposition of the country offered a good chance. A stable and healthy society might have absorbed and killed the virulent germ of Nihilism. The alternative was infection. Those who have tried to analyse the harmful effects of the Great War have often over-estimated the importance of purely political events. The Versailles Treaty, in spite of its defects, was not inevitably the source of further serious trouble. German public opinion took little interest in the proceedings. Even a political act of indefensible harshness, such as the prolongation of the blockade which made Lord Plumer send his famous telegram, cannot be called the seed of the calamity that was to follow. It was a dark episode, hardly more. The peculiarity of the peace settlement was the attempt to combine power politics with Wilson's Utopian generalities. This alone accounted for serious defects. It also became the source of interminable dispute. But even severe critics of Versailles have to admit that the second World War broke out because the treaty had been abandoned not because it had been concluded: Hitler could not have become a menace without German rearmament. This resurrection of Prussia could have been prevented if the military stipulations of Versailles, based on sound suspicion, had remained valid. The ‘spirit of Locarno’ gave German power politics a new chance which the versatile Dr. Stresemann did not fail to appreciate and which Hitler seized. No—Versailles does not explain the course of events in Germany. What transformed Germany into a centre of revolutionary unrest was the unchecked influx of war Nihilism.

A capitalist society that suffers from severe setbacks such as defeat in war entails, is incapable of coping with that most potent force of disintegration. Modern war cannot be expected to be just an episode in the lives of all men who had to take part in it. Lucky are those who can return to their proper work and their familiar surroundings once the armistice has been signed. Most of us have known such men in the trenches, good fighters but all the time fathers of their families, in fact civilians who had taken up arms. Their centre of gravity lay outside the war and outside the scope of their soldierly duties. In the lives of others, however, war established itself (nearly always very much against their own liking) as an overpowering reality giving the lie to all standards of peace. War Nihilism can only affect men who for personal and social reasons or because of their age have not got an outside centre of gravity. The war experience engulfs them; they lose all roots. There were thousands of them after the war and they were bound to become a grave social danger if the conditions of life and other influences could not

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restore their seriously disturbed frame of mind. The revolutionary movements in Germany, regardless of their programme, gained immense strength through the influx of that spirit. Generally speaking, all revolutions are very much alike. What happened in Corcyra was repeated in Paris. The slogans differ, not the deeds. But even the Jacobins were animated by some ideals, though not all of them. The fighters of 1848 were mostly lofty idealists, not counting the professional instigators. In post-war Germany the revolutionary spirit became decidedly cynical and acid. To make a revolution, to kill opponents, to direct persecutions, to establish a most ruthless system of state control, to do all that without real beliefs was indeed a new departure. Compare Hitler with Robespierre. The French tribune was an idealist who had turned into an insane fanatic. To quote Mr. Belloc's words: 'It was Robespierre who said that if ever man should come to deny God, the initiative would proceed not from the poor but from the rich. Look at the world around you to-day, and remark the profundity of that truth.'

It seems impossible to make an appreciative comment like this on any of Hitler's sayings. The German 'Führer' was a Catiline politician. As an actor he was capable of casting a spell over himself, plunging into very different emotions. He hugged little children who brought him bouquets. He walked on corpses, but (so we are told) he would not tread on flowers. The clue to his personality is that he fed on spite. It gave him pleasure to break man's spirit. 'The world can only be ruled by fear.' Another maxim which has already been quoted is a perfect gem: 'I am freeing men from the dirty chimera called conscience and from the demands of a freedom and personal independence which only a very few can bear.' Let us not attribute originality to this repugnant conception of human affairs. It is widespread but there are, fortunately, many degrees of persistency. The disillusioned interpretation of human nature has become the basic common conviction of modern political activism though the actual programmes differ. Hence the determination to control and, if necessary, to compel man in all his activities also in his thoughts and feelings. Hence the peculiar love of violence and compulsion. Hence the complete disregard of individuals who are sacrificed without uneasiness. This callous treatment of individual men and the drastic suspense of justice are the marks by which this spirit can be discerned however smartly it might try to hide itself behind ideals and slogans. Love of mankind (upheld as a principle) or devotion to the proletariat or some master race are perfectly compatible with hatred and contempt of the neighbour. Hitler was not the bold, solitary, Nietzschean philosopher that he would have liked to be. Contempt of man is in the air—an element of the atmosphere which we breathe.

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Even this perverted man cannot claim to be the true model of revolutionary cynicism. There is much evidence to prove that the idol of the populace was despised in certain circles of the party; his self-pity made him contemptible, and he had, on the whole, not gone far enough to please the cynics who believed in nothing but dynamic force. These men laughed at idealists, at all those silly fools, male and female, who drank in Hitler's words! They held that ideas are neither right nor wrong, but just useful weapons and explosives; they appreciated the frenzy of dynamic nationalism which Fichte proclaimed 150 years ago. Hitler has been the champion of this sordid spirit in its crudest form; nobody else, presumably, could have blown the trumpet like him; both dupes and Catiline cynics followed the call, treading the path which led to slaughter. *Dilexisti omnia verba praecipitationis, lingua dolosa.*

Appeasement gave Hitler time to consolidate his power. It also offered him the chance of choosing the point of dispute with the outside world himself. Thus he was enabled to obscure the real issue. For Hitler's unscrupulous and deceitful foreign policy which eventually led to war represents most inadequately the true character of the National Socialist challenge. Dachau is a clearer symbol than Danzig. The war of 1939 was in actual fact closer related to Hitler's torture chambers than to the problems of Danzig and the Polish Corridor, though the sequence of events seems to suggest the contrary. The blood of innocent people cried out for vengeance—that is the basic truth about the fight against Hitler.

We are often warned not to oversimplify a complicated problem. The opposite mistake, however, is more frequent. We tend to turn a simple and clear issue that demands decision into an almost insoluble problem by linking it up (unnecessarily) with different and highly controversial topics. The resolution to stand up against Hitler and all his power was not the outcome of analysis nor the fruit of extensive study. We cannot all acquire sufficient knowledge of social and historical problems; we are entitled to suspend our judgement on such questions and yet be firmly rooted in our enmity. Dachau and Buchenwald (to mention only two obnoxious names) give us all the guidance we need. There has been cruel murder on a large scale, perpetrated by comparatively few, condoned by many. Prince Max von Baden summed up the essence of the trouble when he wrote in 1923 describing the post-war anarchy: 'You can be a murderer in Germany without being defamed.' Prince Max was right. From moral disorder have all the evils emerged. Why, we may ask, did not the Christian Churches in Germany read the signs of the time as clearly as the Prince? Their protest (honourable though it was) came too late to influence the course of events and was directed almost exclusively against false doctrine. The condemnation of murder and cruelty,

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not in general terms but referring to actual cases, would have been more effective.

Outside Germany there was indignation but no readiness to interfere. The principle of non-intervention when applied to disturbances of moral significance can only postpone a conflict and thus increase its magnitude. Metternich had realized this. So had Burke. But modern Europe adopted a different attitude. This was the time when Hans Litten (one amongst many) was tortured to death in concentration camps whilst efforts from abroad to rescue him were snubbed by the German Government in the most insolent manner.

Es schreit der Leidende, das Echo schweigt,
der Nachbar stellt sich taub; die Welt bleibt träge.
Der Unstern hat am Himmel sich gezeigt,
und schwächer werden aller Herzen Schläge.

Max Hermann-Neisse, *Apokalypse* 1933.¹

There have been wars in history that came to an end only to be followed by a period of even greater sufferings. Revolutions and civil strife rising from the embers of a war have always been exceptionally ferocious, but the victims found often no real sympathy in the outside world, certainly no help, because men had grown weary. In the council chambers of the mighty and among the rank and file the old words were spoken: 'Am I my brother's keeper?' Will that be the dreadful end? The gates of Hell wide open?

The pacification of Europe is not a task that has to be undertaken for the first time. But devastation and disorder are greater to-day than ever before. The Congress of Vienna was confronted with easier but similar problems. Who would not wish that, in the end, the statesmen of to-day will compare not unfavourably with their predecessors a hundred and thirty years ago, and who would dare to hope for much more? Metternich said after victory had been won: 'The basis of modern policy is and must be repose.' The words were true at the time when they were spoken; they are also true to-day. Will normal life return and find its home among ruins? Will it be proved—what so many Europeans have ceased to believe—that power is not evil by nature but can embody the kingly virtue of magnanimity if it upholds justice and protects the innocent and the weak?

¹ The sufferer cries—there is no echo. The neighbour pretends to be deaf, the world is indolent. The ominous star has risen; the hearts of men grow faint.

APPENDIX

CHRONOLOGICAL SURVEY

giving the facts to which the commentary refers in their chronological order.

- 1517. October 31. Martin Luther attacks the practice of Church indulgences; the ensuing controversy leads rapidly and unexpectedly to his breach with Rome.
- 1519. Disputation at Leipzig. Luther's breach with Rome becomes manifest. He is excommunicated the following year.
- 1521. Diet of Worms. Luther outlawed; the elector of Saxony, his patron, removes him to a place of safety (the Wartburg).
- 1521-44. Wars between France and Spain. This absorbing struggle prevents Charles V, Emperor and King of Spain, from interfering in German Church affairs. The outlawed monk lives safely in Wittenberg; the opposition of the German Protestant princes finds time to consolidate itself.
- 1522. 'Inarticulate heresy' (Karlstadt, the Zwickau prophets) stirs up trouble in Wittenberg. Luther returns and restores order. His fight against the inarticulate heresy begins.
- 1525. Peasants' war. Ends after critical moments with a complete victory of the princes, ruthlessly exploited. Luther sides with the Counter-Revolution. The same year: Luther's controversy with Erasmus.
- 1529. Second diet of Speier. The Lutheran princes protested against the resolution of the diet to enforce the Decree of Worms. Hence the name Protestants.
- 1546. Luther dies.
- 1546-7. The war of the League of Schmalkalde: Charles's belated effort to crush Protestantism by force. In spite of his military success the Emperor fails to achieve his object. The Protestants, supported by France, have to be recognized.
- 1555. Peace of Augsburg: toleration granted to the Lutherans. Catholicism reconsolidates its position. Europe lining up for battle.
- 1562-98. Religious wars in France, brought to an end by Henry Bourbon, the Huguenot leader who becomes King of France and turns Catholic.
- 1609. The crisis about the succession in Julich Cleves. A European war

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imminent because Henry IV interferes and backs the Protestant candidate.

1610. Henry assassinated—the outbreak of the conflict postponed for another eight years.

1610–24. Period of regency in France: Mary of Medici. In 1624 Richelieu comes to power; the 'Great Design' of Henry IV is taken up again.

1618. Protestant rebellion in Bohemia, the beginning of the Thirty Years War. All powers of Europe (with the exception of England) are drawn into the struggle, one after the other.

1628. Richelieu conquers La Rochelle. He destroys the political power of French Protestantism yet grants religious toleration.

1629. The Catholic powers, Spain and Austria, at the height of success. Wallenstein on the shores of the Baltic. The edict of Restitution which was meant to inaugurate the re-establishment of Catholicism in Germany.

1630. Turning of the tide: Sweden joins in. Wallenstein's dismissal.

1632. Gustavus Adolphus in Munich. Wallenstein recalled. November: Battle of Lützen (Gustavus Adolphus killed).

1634. Wallenstein's rebellion against the Emperor. He is murdered at Eger (February 25th).

1635. France joins the war (having subsidized Sweden since 1630).

1648. Treaty of Westphalia. The weakness of the Holy Roman Empire (its permanent constitutional crisis) is made the corner-stone of French foreign policy for the next hundred years.

1658. Mazarin's Rhenish alliance: a number of German princes accept French leadership in defence of the Treaty of Westphalia.

1681–7. Aggressive policy of Louis XIV against the Empire, coinciding with a Turkish attack. The latter beaten off. Co-operation between Austria and England to check the further advance of France.

1701–13. The climax: the war of the Spanish succession.

1713–40. Reign of Frederick William I the founder of Prussia.

1740. Frederick II (joined by France) attacks Austria. He seizes Silesia and gets away with it (Battle of Mollwitz). England, fighting on the side of Maria Theresa (since 1742), withdraws her troops from the Continent in 1745 in order to meet the menace of the Jacobite rebellion.

1748. Peace of Aix la Chapelle. From that time onwards Austria (Graf Kaunitz) plans a war of revenge; growing colonial tension between England and France.

1756. Alliance between England and Prussia (January). This precipitates the alliance between France and Austria (May).

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- 1756–63. Seven Years War. Frederick II overruns Saxony expecting perhaps that the Kaunitz coalition (Austria, France, Russia) would not work. The fight on the Continent is linked up with the colonial struggle between France and England.
1772. First partition of Poland.
1786. Frederick II dies.
1790. Convention of Reichenbach (between Prussia and Austria) inaugurates a period of precarious co-operation.
1792. Beginning of the revolutionary wars. Austria and Prussia march against France. The invasion is checked at Valmy (September).
1793. England joins the coalition. The Committee of Public Safety establishes itself in France. Second partition of Poland.
1795. Treaty of Basle: separate peace between France and Prussia. Third partition of Poland.
1805. Napoleon's Confederation of the Rhine. This leads to the abdication of Emperor Francis and the end of the Holy Roman Empire.
1806. Napoleon defeats Prussia.
1807. Treaty of Tilsit: the beginning of the short-lived Franco-Russian co-operation which ends with Napoleon's campaign against Russia in 1812.
1813. Treaty of Kalisch—alliance between Prussia and Russia. The proclamation of Kutusov to the German people. The war of liberation begins.
1815. Congress of Vienna. The German Confederation (der deutsche Bund) founded.
1848. March. Rebellion in Austria; flight of Metternich. Fighting and barricades in Berlin. Triumph of the populace over the King (Frederick William IV).
- May. German National Assembly meets at Frankfurt on Main (Paulskirche).
- October. Defeat of the Revolution in Vienna (Prince Windischgrätz).
- November. Defeat of the Revolution in Berlin (General Wrangel).
1849. April. Frederick William IV refuses to become German Emperor.
- May–July. Insurrections in Saxony and Baden.
1851. The German Confederation re-established.
1862. Bismarck comes to power. Conflict with Parliament ('Landtag') till 1866.
1866. Prussia's victory over Austria. Battle of Sadowa (July). End of the German Confederation. Austria excluded from German affairs.
- 1870–1. Franco-Prussian war. The foundation of the 'Reich' (January 18th, 1871). This was the anniversary of the coronation of Frederick I the first King of Prussia.

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- 1888–1918. Wilhelm II.
1890. Bismarck's dismissal (he dies in 1898).
1893. Franco–Russian Alliance.
1900. The naval programme.
1912. Naval agreement between England and France. England promised to defend the French coast to enable the French fleet to concentrate in the Mediterranean.
1914. January. The Liman Sanders crisis settled. Russia had resented the presence of a German military mission in Constantinople.
February. The Russian conference on the Straits.
June 28th. Murder of Archduke Francis Ferdinand.
July 5th. Count Hoyos in Berlin.
July 23. Austria's ultimatum.
July 28th. Austria declares war on Serbia.
July 30. Russia's general mobilization.
July 31st. 'Drohende Kriegsgefahr' proclaimed in Germany.
August 1st. Germany's declaration of war on Russia.
1918. November 9th. Revolution in Germany. Abdication and flight of Wilhelm II.
1919. January. Defeat of the Spartacus group (Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg) in Berlin. Reactionary troops ('Freikorps') defend the Republic.
February. The German National Assembly meets at Weimar. Ebert elected President of the Republic.
June 28th. The Versailles Treaty signed.
1920. Hitler starts his political propaganda in Munich.
1923. November. Hitler's abortive *coup d'état* (in co-operation with General Ludendorff).
1925. October. Treaty of Locarno. Germany acknowledged again her western frontier and the demilitarization of the Rhineland.
1932. August 10th. The Potempa murder. Hitler expresses his solidarity with the condemned murderers.
August 13th. Hindenburg refuses to make Hitler Chancellor ('My conscience forbids it').
1933. January. Hitler comes to power, called into office by Hindenburg. Coalition Government.
February 26th. The Reichstag fire.
March 21st. The Day of Potsdam.
October. Germany leaves the League of Nations.
1934. June 30th. The Purge. Assassination of General von Schleicher. The capitulation of 'Prussia'.
August 2nd. Hindenburg dies.

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- 1935. March. Conscription reintroduced.
- 1936. March. Military occupation of the Rhineland.
- 1938. March. Invasion of Austria.
September. Munich agreement.
- 1939. March. Occupation of Czechoslovakia.
September 1st. Germany invades Poland.

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